

VISION

IDENTITY

PURPOSE



# VIP Mentoring

## An Impact Assessment

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is widely recognised that keeping a young person in education, employment or training will have a significant impact on their future outcomes. Bearing this in mind, recent guidance for local authorities from the Department of Education on their statutory duties in ensuring post-16 participation in education and training reinforces the need that some students will have for enhanced support [1].

There is also a rich body of evidence which points towards interventions in schools which improve young people's wellbeing [2-5]. Interventions which support adolescent wellbeing have been shown not only to benefit life chances due to their effect on academic achievement, but to affect adult outcomes independently of academic success, and this effect is especially strong for the least able, and those from the lowest social class backgrounds [2]. Measures of wellbeing are therefore widely considered as important as those for 'harder' outcomes, such as attendance and achievement.

In this impact assessment of LifeLine's VIP mentoring programme, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data is used to assess the effect of the programme on student wellbeing, behaviour, attendance and attainment. The qualitative data is also used to comment on success criteria and to make recommendations for future development.

Quantitative measures for student wellbeing show a significant improvement after mentoring, and this is reinforced by the qualitative data which identifies strong themes of enabling young people to build confidence, to improve self-esteem, and to learn positive behaviours to cope with school and home life more effectively. These improvements in behaviour are reflected in the data supplied by the schools, showing significant reductions in behaviour interventions for mentored students; 89% of students and 75% of teachers report improvements in behaviour. In terms of attendance, 79% of teachers and 69% of students report that mentoring improves attendance. An anomaly in the data is that percentage attendance data provided by schools does not match this finding and some possible reasons for this are discussed.

There is also evidence of very positive results of the mentoring programme on the schools as a whole, which will be discussed in section 3.3. Improved behaviour of the few has an impact on the learning environment of the many, and there are huge savings in opportunity costs when senior teachers are spending less time and energy dealing with behavioural incidents. One senior teacher estimated that he spent five to ten hours less per week on dealing with mentored students' disruptive behaviour, making a strong economic case for the programme.

For many students, their time on the programme marked a turning point in terms of their behaviour, self-belief and the development of resilience, which they believed set them on a different course than their previous track record would have predicted. This year 11 student, near the end of his mentoring journey, expresses the unique role of the mentor and the effect being mentored has had on his life:

"The mentor kind of brings something new to the table that we can't have with our teachers, or like with our parents or with our friends. It's like that perfect in the middle of a friend, a teacher and a parent, just that perfect guidance. I'd say as young adults, there's a hole in us that needs to be filled. There's that emptiness, and having a mentor sort of fills that, makes us feel connected, like we can actually trust someone. That we're actually achieving something, becoming better people."

## INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that to prevent young people from becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) is vital for them as individuals and for society as a whole. The Europe-wide figures on social disadvantage and NEET are stark. Young people who have low levels of education have a threefold risk of becoming NEET compared with those with higher levels; young people with an immigration background are 70% more likely to become NEET than nationals; and young people who suffer from some kind of disability or health issue are 40% more likely to be NEET than those who have good health [6] Compounding this, spending time as NEET may cause further social disadvantage for a young person, in the form of disaffection, insecure and poor future employment, youth offending or mental and physical health problems.

As well as personal costs, there are significant costs to society. Using the 2008 NEET 16-18 cohort (208,000 young people) as a basis for calculation, the Audit Commission estimated a cost of £13 billion to the public purse and £22 billion in opportunity costs before the cohort reaches retirement age. NEETs are also at higher risk of being politically and socially alienated. Compared to their non-NEET counterparts, these young people have a dramatically lower level of political interest and political and social engagement, and a lower level of trust.

If young people can be supported to remain in school, they are significantly more likely to make the transition to further education, employment or training, and it is therefore vital that preventative measures are taken to identify young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, and to support them to remain engaged within the wider education system.

### Aim and structure of this review

LifeLine's Vision, Identity and Purpose (V.I.P.) mentoring programme is such a preventative measure, and this paper aims to assess the impact the programme is having on the mentored young people and the schools involved. The programme has gathered quantitative data for wellbeing in the form of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), data on the frequency of poor behavioural incidents, data on attainment in the form of subject grades, and data on attendance. Four schools have also provided behaviour, attendance and attainment data for those students who would have been chosen next for the intervention, with the assumption that their outcomes would have varied only slightly from the intervention group in the absence of the programme.

Qualitative data that was already collected in the form of student feedback has been combined with new data in the form of focus groups with students, a focus group with mentors, and interviews with the programme leads and two school heads of year, in order to describe the programme in more detail, identify deeper effects in young peoples' lives, comment on success criteria, and make recommendations for developing the programme further.

It is hoped that this evaluation of LifeLine's V.I.P. mentoring model will contribute to the evidence base for school-based interventions aimed at reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET, giving robust evidence of the outcomes for the young people involved.

### LifeLine's offer

LifeLine is a voluntary sector provider which offers a wide range of community development services through its strategic partnerships, and has a strong commitment to understanding the changing needs of local people. For all of their services for young people, which include listening services, projects for vulnerable young people in the school transition period, and training for 14-19 year olds

who are not in mainstream education, the mentoring relationship has always been the central foundation, with the aim of empowering young people to make positive life choices, and enabling them to realise their full potential.

The model which underpins LifeLine's varied work with young people is the V.I.P. model, which recognises that in order to flourish and develop resilience, young people need vision for their lives, a strong sense of identity, and purposeful activity. The programme is comprised of an initial assessment followed by two terms of one-to-one meetings between the mentor and mentee, with mentors seeking from the outset to instill vision for a more positive future. In the first term, discussion tools and informal activities are used to support students to develop a strong sense of personal identity, with a stronger emphasis in the second term on discovering a purpose which resonates with the young person's developing interests and skills. Group activities then work alongside these to create an environment for developing teamwork and social skills.

The model has gained wide recognition, with LifeLine winning the Children and Young People Now's 'Learning Award' in 2013 (as well as in 2009 and highly commended in 2010), the Mayor of London's 2012 Inspire Mark, the Phillip Lawrence Award and the RSA Youth Award for Innovation in 2009 and 2011. The programme has been delivered in schools for the last fifteen years, working alongside each school's pastoral support system.

In 2013, LifeLine formed a diverse partnership with five other third sector providers who have track records in delivering successful interventions with disadvantaged young people, and as the lead partner, made a successful bid to deliver schools-based mentoring for young people in year 10 whom the schools identified as most at risk of becoming NEET. The work is currently underway in forty schools throughout the East London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Newham, with LifeLine as the lead partner delivering in twenty-five of these. This evaluation relates to the period April-July 2015.

## Literature Review

A rapid review of the literature was carried out, with particular focus on previous mentoring interventions, their characteristics and their effectiveness. The findings are summarised below.

A systematic review of interventions to prevent young people becoming NEET was conducted by a team from Bristol University in 2011 [8]. Despite finding that most projects had been at best poorly evaluated with very little robust evidence about their effectiveness, the report noted that some of the most innovative and engaging interventions they reviewed were run by community organisations which took a more holistic approach, trying numerous different initiatives to address the multidimensional causes of social problems in an area.

When Ofsted surveyed twenty-nine schools that were known for their effectiveness in inclusion, some key factors were the involvement of a wide range of adults with the school and community to support students, close working relationships with agencies responsible for supporting children and young people, and regular and effective communication with parents and carers, including closely involving them in strategy design. With regard to the role of the mentor, the report says:

'Mentoring also helped students to understand the importance of education and how it could help them to achieve their ambitions. As a result, school attendance improved and the number of young people continuing in education or training after the age of 16 increased considerably' [9] (p.16).

Initiatives to tackle this problem have focused on both preventing young people from becoming NEET, and on re-engaging those already NEET. The Department of Education's document 'What works re-engaging young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)?' [1] looked at children who had already stepped out of the education system, and examined strategies for re-engagement. Although 'already NEET' is a different target group of young people from that targeted by LifeLine mentoring, it makes a useful contribution to this paper to look briefly at some of the features of these programmes in terms of the styles of engagement, retention and progression of disadvantaged young people to a particular programme.

The common features of successful programmes included having intensive support and one-to-one engagement with an advisor, tailoring the programme to meet individual needs, and a financial incentive to remain in the programmes. These success criteria resonate with school-based preventative programmes in the role of the advisor and the tailoring to the individual; in terms of financial incentives, for many young people this was an essential aspect which paid for travel to the programme – an aspect not applicable in a situation where students are already in school. An interesting feature of these pilots was that advisors often developed a specialism focusing and developing expertise in particular groups, such as young carers or pregnant teenagers, which allowed for more effective working relationships with other support agencies for young people.

### Engage in Education. Catch 22 and I CAN mentoring intervention

One recent, well evaluated intervention designed to prevent young people becoming NEET is the Engage in Education (EiE) pilot programme funded by the Department for Education, and implemented by a partnership led by Catch 22, a third sector provider [8]. This two-year pilot was delivered in secondary schools in Croydon, Bristol, Harlow and Newcastle, with a core offer of interventions aimed at helping learners at risk of exclusion to improve their attendance and attainment. In this respect, with its partnership approach, and main emphasis on one-to-one mentoring, it is similar to LifeLine's V.I.P. mentoring programme and provides a useful comparison.

The evaluation showed significant improvements in the attendance, attainment, behaviour and 'softer' outcomes for learners taking part in the programme. In summary, 58% of learners increased their attendance, 61% of learners increased their attainment, and 55% of those learners who had previously had at least one fixed-term exclusion at the beginning of the intervention had no further exclusions by the end of the programme. Students and staff also reported increased self-confidence, communication difficulties being addressed, and more positive attitudes towards school and education in general. Learners gave a range of reasons for the success of the programme, with a significant factor being the opportunity for one-to-one mentoring. There was also very positive feedback from school staff, programme staff and parents, all reporting positive outcomes for learners in key areas such as confidence and communication skills, as well as in attainment and attendance. Although comparison groups were not used, these outcomes were thought to be mainly attributable to the EiE programme interventions. In identifying features of the programme which were central to success, in addition to the one-to-one mentoring were group-based projects, skill mix and skill sharing amongst staff, and good relationships with key school staff.

### Why measure attendance as well as attainment?

It is clear that attainment at school is a strong protective factor against becoming NEET, since the NEET group have worse GCSE attainment than all other groups and even amongst those from affluent families, and the incidence of NEET is high for those with poor GCSEs. GCSE attainment

appears to be a stronger predictor of being included within the NEET category than socioeconomic background [8].

The relationship between good attendance and attainment should not be underestimated, however. In his 2012 report on attendance, Charlie Taylor (then government expert advisor on behaviour) pointed out that when pupils miss more than 50% of school, only 3% of them manage to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including Maths and English, whereas 73% of pupils who have over 95% attendance achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C. He calculates that, for an average sized secondary school, improving its attendance by 1% adds an additional 1,300 pupil-days spent in school [10]. He argues that despite the final years of secondary school representing those with the worst attendance (with the majority of children whose parents are taken to court for poor attendance being in Years 10 and 11), by this stage it is usually too late for prosecution to solve the problem, and other non-punitive strategies are needed.

Bearing this in mind, recent guidance for local authorities from the Department of Education on their statutory duties in ensuring post-16 participation in education and training, emphasises that some students will need enhanced support [11]. It requires them to:

*'make available to all young people aged 13-19 support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training. They are expected to continue to work with schools to identify those who are in need of targeted support or who are at risk of not participating post-16. They will need to agree how these young people can be referred for intensive support, drawn from the range of education and training support services available locally' (p. 9).*

In drawing up non-statutory guidance to help Local Authorities to fulfil this duty, the Department of Education consulted with community and voluntary sector organisations, and a set of principles was developed to guide commissioning and provision. A summary of these principles is as follows:

- Provision should be tailored to the young person, with on-going individual needs assessment which allows the programme to flex around the needs of the young person;
- Achievable and agreed outcomes should be decided with the young person as part of an individual plan, with strong consideration on developing the social and emotional capabilities of the young person, without losing sight of their sustained engagement in education or training;
- Strong partnerships with local providers are important in providing access to appropriate sources of information to help young people make informed choices about the education, training and employment opportunities available in their area.

### Why measure wellbeing?

Interventions which support young people in school have been shown not only to benefit life chances due to their impact on academic achievement, but also to affect adult outcomes independent of academic success. In 2010, the children's charity Brathay commissioned a literature review, 'Issues in Youth Transitions', to inform and develop the work they were doing with children and young people to support positive transitions into adulthood [4]. Their ethos is to use personal development to ensure that young people have the social skills, psychological wellbeing, self-confidence and resilience to flourish, and to overcome the difficulties that they face in transition. In this respect, they share the goals and vision of LifeLine's Children and Young People's Programme. The findings of the review reinforce the vital importance of holding these 'soft' outcomes as

priorities. The author discusses the use of this term 'soft', expressing the view that it infers falsely that wellbeing outcomes are of less importance than 'harder' outcomes of achievement and attendance.

The review examines research which demonstrates the relative importance of good adolescent psychological wellbeing alongside or over academic achievement in securing good levels of adult wellbeing. For example Carneiro et al [2] argue that academic improvement benefits the most able, whereas personal and social development benefit the least able from the lowest social class backgrounds. Therefore because social and emotional skills are more open to development than academic skills during adolescent years [10], this gives additional force to the argument that they those skills should be highly valued as part of secondary schooling. This is a hopeful message; Margo and Sodha [3] show that psychological wellbeing is the single most powerful factor in social mobility, whereby individuals with strong non-academic abilities are more likely to succeed despite disadvantage:

*'These findings suggest that emotional wellbeing is becoming increasingly important to young people's life chances and that there is a growing urgency in the need to tackle emotional wellbeing. If we want to give all individuals an equal start in life, and to ensure the emotional and mental health of the next generation, youth policy should now explicitly focus on developing the emotional wellbeing of young people' (p. 11).*

The key message in this paper is that personal development is a key first stage in addressing issues related to becoming NEET, as well as in improving attainment and achievement.

# QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

## Introduction

### Data collection

A rich range of qualitative data was collected in the form of interviews, focus groups, and written case studies:

- five focus groups with a total of twenty mentored students from two schools;
- two interviews with the senior link teacher in each school;
- an interview with the mentor team leader;
- an interview with LifeLine's Director for Young People's Services;
- a focus group with seven the mentors;
- ten individual case studies written by mentors.

### Ethical considerations

It was explained to all participants before recording of interviews and focus groups that their contributions would be made anonymous, and that their consent would be sought for any contribution which might identify them; the consent of all participants was sought and given before recording was started. It was also explained that recordings would be deleted after the transcribing process.

### Analysis

The recordings were listened to three times and transcribed. The data were then coded as themes were identified throughout the process, with some being deliberately explored further in subsequent focus groups and interviews in order to gain more insight on themes of interest.

### Results

As explained in the introduction, the main aim of this evaluation is to determine whether the LifeLine mentoring programme is an effective strategy for preventing young people becoming NEET, through its effect on attendance, behaviour, achievement, and wellbeing. For this evaluation to be useful beyond simply evidencing success or failure, it also seeks to determine criteria for positive or negative outcomes through looking at process.

Questions for the focus groups were chosen to elicit both the 'How does it work?' and the 'What is the impact?' of the programme. Very broadly, under these two main strands, all participants were asked to describe the mentoring journey and to identify positive and negative aspects of the programme. They were also asked to identify outcomes of the programme in terms of achievement, attendance, behaviour and wellbeing. The themes and subthemes which were identified during this iterative process are summarised below.

### Themes identified

The following table is a summary of the themes which arose from the qualitative part of the evaluation. At the broadest level, the data divided up into two main areas; the structure and process of running the programme, and the impact of the programme. Within the first area, there were three major themes. These were the role and experience of the mentor, the way that LifeLine engages with the schools, and strategies for engaging young people in mentoring. Within the second area of the programme, the data gave information on three major outcome areas; on behaviour, on

academic achievement, and on the effect to the school more generally. Within each major theme, were smaller topics of interest, and each subtheme is evidenced individually.

### Structure and Process: How does the programme work?

Major theme	Subthemes
<b>The role and experience of the mentor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment and retention</li> <li>• Management structure / supervision</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• Going above and beyond</li> <li>• Defining the role</li> </ul>
<b>Logistics and engagement with schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship with the school</li> <li>• Recruitment and retention of schools and students</li> <li>• Most appropriate year group</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies for engagement of young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activity</li> <li>• Individualised approach / Innovation</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> </ul>

### Impact: What does the programme achieve?

Major theme	Subthemes
<b>Behavioural impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor as interpreter</li> <li>• Building confidence</li> <li>• Social skills / making friends</li> <li>• Social and family issues</li> </ul>
<b>Academic impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Target setting and motivation</li> </ul>
<b>Impact on school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing</li> <li>• Mentor as mediator</li> <li>• Less classroom disruption</li> <li>• Time saving; economic case</li> </ul>

For each of these themes, there now follows a short summary with key quotes. A wider range of quotes can be found in Appendix A. The codes used for the data are M for mentor, TL for team leader, S for student, T for teacher, D for director and A for the author. Where dialogue is included, as opposed to individual comments, a font colour is used for all contributions within the same piece of dialogue. Names have been removed and substituted with M for any mentor and S for any student.

## Structure and process: How does the programme work?

### The role and experience of the mentor

#### *Recruitment and Training*

As those working one-to-one with students in schools, it is primarily the quality of the mentor's work which determines success, and the director described a rigorous recruitment process which reflected a strong commitment to building the right team, with the right skills. The high calibre of mentors was strongly noted by the two senior teachers interviewed.

The training process acknowledges that individual mentors come with different training needs, and a needs assessment starts at the recruitment stage:

*D: If we take them, that assessment day would start the first bit of training. We'd look at the points that were weaker on the assessment day or interview, and we'd look to address those in the training.*

#### *Management structure / supervision*

The management structure sets out that the ten mentors are supervised and managed by two team leaders, who are in turn supervised and managed by the director. The opportunity for one-to-one supervision was highly valued, and due to the isolation of the role, the opportunity for the weekly team meeting was viewed very positively, and seen as a setting where teamwork could be practiced:

*TL: The team is absolutely fantastic. It's the Wednesday "all together" that makes the team so strong and it is a very isolated job so I think that is quite beneficial that we all do get along so well.*

*M: We do it (group supervision) with our manager; we go through some of our cases, and see how we can support each other, and that's really good, really positive.*

#### *Workload / Job satisfaction*

Mentors spoke with real passion about their work, and had an obvious sense of pride at seeing the changes in the students. There was a strong sense among the mentors that it was worth it because of the difference they were making in the young people's lives:

*M: Hearing 14 to 15 year olds saying it's good to have someone to talk to, other than the teacher, or 'I want longer sessions', you really feel like you're making an impact, and it's good.*

Administrative duties around reporting for the contract were referred to by all staff as a significant part of the role, which was made clear at the interview. Whilst it was clear that tasks such as paperwork represented the biggest area of stress for mentors, it was also clear that the workload of the mentors had been clearly thought through, with time allocated to both the mentoring itself and the necessary paperwork.

Despite the pressures of administrative deadlines, on reflection, the contractual need for the paperwork was recognised by the mentors, and the collection of evidence for the programme's impact was also valued:

*M: Yeah, about the evaluation forms, even though it's a lot of work to do, it's good for us to see the feedback, to see what they're saying. And maybe that's what those teachers who aren't respecting it need to see.*

### Going above and beyond

A strong subtheme was the way in which the mentors went above and beyond merely fulfilling the contract, mostly in continuing to be available informally to students once they had finished the programme:

*M: Ah I wish I could (continue to support the student) ... see how he is.... he pops in at lunchtime so I make sure everything's alright with him, so yeah it is good...*

*S: We see him when he's here on Mondays working with someone else. Yeah, not us.*

At times of stress such as deadlines for administrative tasks however, mentors described a sense of frustration whereby they were under pressure to produce data or reports, and these extra contacts which they wanted to provide were a pressure on their time:

*M: We do have a lot of complex stuff that we're dealing with with these young people, and at the end of the day, I know we only get half hour sessions, but we can't stop them talking and say 'do you know what, your time's up, you gotta go.'*

### Defining the role

The nature of this mentoring role combines the need to relate well to young people with the need to relate as well to senior professionals; a combination not always required for youth work.

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*"It's like that perfect in the middle of a friend, a teacher and a parent, just that perfect guidance."*

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All of the focus groups with students identified that the mentor fulfils a unique role which most students tried to describe. The predominant feeling is one of being given undivided time, being listened to, and relating as more of a peer than within a hierarchical structure. Within this, there is evidence of mentors exercising a high level of professionalism, and walking a careful path of limited self-disclosure.

This student articulates an interesting perception of how the mentoring relationship, as well as being beneficial, does not carry the stigma that he associates with other one-to-one support:

*S: I'd say it's like counselling but without all the iffy bits; so like without making us feel like we're crazy. It's really helpful, and I'm sort of progressing without being too worried about how it may, not have repercussions, but like, how it affects us. Cos some people have counselling sessions and that, and all of a sudden, that's what their life becomes, that's who they become – that person that has counselling. This is more sort of like, don't' know how to put it, kind of like teaching with a friend, that's what it feels like.*

### Logistics of engagement of schools

Currently, an outline of the structure of the programme is that the school recruits ten students in year 10 who receive two terms of weekly one-to-one mentoring. For logistical reasons to do with the fund's monitoring stipulations, if the end of the 26 weeks falls midway through a term, mentors continue to see the students monthly until the end of that term. Despite this structure evolving by default, it has been an improvement on the original structure as it tapers off the support for the young person, and allows for ongoing informal contact which many students really value.

### *Relationship with the school*

A strong mutually respectful relationship between LifeLine and the schools emerged strongly as a criterion for success for the programme. The two schools where focus groups and staff interviews took place happened to be those with whom LifeLine had stronger relationships, and thus presumably reflected better practice, but this was balanced by accounts from some mentors of their experiences in other schools. The stronger relationships were firmly based on an appreciation of the respective roles, and the involvement of a strong champion from the school.

*M: Personally I work quite closely with the head of year at the school that I'm at. I think that's vital because they are like the pastoral leader of that school and that year group, and everything I do I will liaise with the head of year.*

*M: Some schools I honestly think don't see the point of us. And in the hierarchy of the schools we're very low down their list. They don't know what we're doing, they don't know what our role is, so they see us as 'you come into school and you're taking this kid out of class from year 10 or year 11 every week'.*

The main connection of head or year was the vital link for the programme, and when this relationship broke down due to long term sickness or maternity leave, without sufficient buy-in from the staff member deputising, the whole programme in that school was at risk of breaking down, an example of which was described by the director. Whilst acknowledging that there needs to be a champion for the programme within the school, it was felt there was also a need for being more widely known in the school, by both teaching and non-teaching staff, and several mentors suggested using inset days as an opportunity to deliver a consistent message to all staff.

### *Recruitment and retention of students*

For this particular contract, the schools had ten free places on the programme, and both senior teachers interviewed said that they would have liked three or four more places in the year 10 cohort, and had to make difficult decisions around selection. The mentors mentioned behaviour as a key criterion, but equally talked about low confidence and self-esteem as a reason why students were selected:

*TL: 90% of it is the factual database of attainments, attendance, behaviour and detentions etc. but then there are some that are doing amazingly well with attainments and stats but then have low self-esteem or confidence issues.*

*M: It's a mixture. Behaviour, confidence, self-esteem.*

*M: Yeah, lots of low confidence in the girls I work with. Very, very shy.*

### *Most appropriate year group*

For this contract, the age stipulation is that the young person must be fourteen years old on 31st August of the year the programme starts, which restricts the programme to year 10 and older. Year 10 was chosen because there are fewer work pressures than in year 11, and young people who most need mentoring have often dropped out of school by year 11 if they have not been supported. One may imagine that raising the age that young people are required to stay in education or training to seventeen would have provided an extended window of opportunity for mentoring programmes to support young people, primarily through working with colleges which tend to be the preferred choice over sixth form for young people who are at risk of NEET. This does not currently appear to be the case, however:

*D: We could work with colleges, but we haven't had any response from the colleges. Colleges don't, in my opinion, have a pastoral network like the schools do. They have huge dropouts. You could argue that's because they get the kids that are essentially dropping out of school, or you could argue that they don't have the pastoral support systems that schools have. But the fact that we've found no-one who can even engage in a conversation about trialling the mentoring with the colleges seems to me to suggest where their focus and interest lies.*

When other participants were asked about the most appropriate age group, all groups of participants felt similarly; that some younger students would benefit from mentoring to pre-empt problems developing. Some students however felt that being mentored throughout the GCSE years was very important for them, with a clear sense of loss when finishing the programme before the end of year 11:

*S: I think it finished at the wrong time. We're just about to do our GCSE exams, and that's like the most stressful, and things are building up on top of us, and we won't know how to handle things, and we sort of need that guidance. It's not there anymore. It's like someone teaching you, guiding you how to do something, and then when it comes to the actual thing, they're not there to help you. I know it's not his fault, but it's a sense of abandonment – that's how we feel.*

### Strategies for engagement of young people

An overwhelming strength of the programme, which was conveyed by all participant groups, was the scope within the programme for innovation and creativity. The ethos of the programme is that it sees young people as unique individuals who have different strengths and challenges, and it is designed, within its limitations of time and funding, to provide unique support to each student. Mentors used a range of tools for engaging students, and a wide range of communication styles to suit the personality of the young person.

#### Group activity

The group activity day which is run at the beginning of the programme featured very highly when the students were asked what they liked about the programme, possibly more than the mentors or management realised. The real value described by the students was in building confidence for making friends and feeling part of a group, which then affected behaviour and attendance:

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*“It builds up your confidence for the whole year ... and then, I'd say you'd probably behave better in lessons cos you'd say to your mates 'come on, let's just do well'.”*

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*S: Yeah, it builds up your confidence for the whole year because if you're not getting along with someone, and they've been like, you haven't been mates with them for a couple of years and that, and then you're in a team with them, you become more closer. And then, I'd say you'd probably behave better in lessons cos you'd say to your mates 'come on, let's just do well'.*

The fact that the students unanimously praised the group activity is an indication of the quality of the mentoring team, as it is clearly a complex intervention requiring highly skilled practitioners:

*D: They have to do a group work activity for the young people, and that's not easy, that's not just going into school and working with a group. That's working with a group of the ten most difficult kids in a year group, bringing them all together for a whole day when you don't know them. So that's a challenging piece.*

When asked what they would do to change the programme, students were very clear that more group activity days would be a priority, and this was echoed by senior staff:

*TL: In terms of the role and the team and how we deliver the program I think there needs to be a group activity at the end that needs to be more structured ... so it gives children the opportunity to show their development, because how they were at the beginning should be totally different to how they are at the end. So I think that should be made more compulsory into the programme.*

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*“When you’re around them type of people, the mentors, and you’re doing the fun stuff, playing football, leisure stuff, you feel like you don’t have to think about the bad stuff, you can just let it all go. You feel happy.”*

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Within the self-completing online survey, free text options were given for the questions ‘What were the highlights for you?’ and ‘What would make the VIP programme better?’ When the responses were filtered to only include the words ‘group’ and ‘activity/activities’, it was found that 24% and 28% of respondents respectively included the group activity days in their responses.

### *Individualised approach / Innovation*

At the beginning of the mentoring relationship, mentors described their approaches of assessing the strengths and challenges of each student. They seemed to work in a similar way, using a menu of tools such as quizzes or worksheets provided as part of their training and from their own work experience, but allowing the tool to serve the young person, not vice versa. The following examples give a sense of the individualized support that student’s experience:

*M: A couple of my students had really severe anger issues, so I contacted a local Barking and Dagenham boxing gym and they’ve been going boxing. Now one of them goes to an MMA club doing martial arts and they feel its helps them release their anger and channel their confusion and frustrations.*

*M: One of my other students wants to join the cadets, for voluntary policemen, and I realised that one of my other students, in my others schools, was already in the cadets. So I asked my other student details of how to do it, who to contact, and I fed that back to my other student and he got through.*

All students talked about targets, which were mostly about attendance and behaviour; getting fewer behaviour points, getting more credits, getting no exclusions, not talking in lessons, getting to lessons on time, getting up on time, getting to bed on time. One of the schools visited had an electronic behaviour and attendance monitoring system, and this data was sent to the mentor ahead of the mentoring sessions so that targets could be compared against the actual data. From the feedback from all participants concerned, this close monitoring meant that targets were taken more seriously and there was opportunity for better student/school feedback.

### *Communication*

Many of the interactions described between students and mentors demonstrate sensitive and thoughtful communication skills, again tailored for each student:

*M: S is a good student. He is quite shy and needs to build his confidence which is why he has been referred. At first it was hard to start a conversation and keep it going. At our third meeting I used my ‘Let’s Talk’ cards - these cards have various topics of conversation printed*

*on the back and S picked 'what kinds of music do you like?' He assured me that I would not like the music he liked which was rap. I replied 'I like rap, I like Jayze and Nas and even Eminem'. He said Eminem was his favourite rapper and asked me why I liked Eminem. I said because he uses his music as therapy to get rid of all the stuff that he has been through and is still working through and gets paid for it, and to me that's clever. He said he had never looked at his music like that but that it was true as most of what Eminem writes about is past experiences which are what makes him so great.*

## Impact: What does the programme achieve?

### Behavioural Impact

Less classroom disruption benefits all students, and for the individual student, better behaviour has a direct academic effect as they are excluded less, and are more focused on learning. In terms of life course, learning to modify behaviour whilst still at school can lead to considerable outcomes in terms of employability and avoiding the criminal justice system [12].

*Usually, I used to just get in trouble cos I never used to talk to people about why I used to do it. Then I just talked about it and it helped - just calmed down a bit.*

Whilst addressing behaviour issues with students, there was a strong sense from the mentors that poor behaviour was a symptom of other issues in students' lives, and by providing a space for these issues to be explored, that behaviour would improve.

*S: Dunno, I'd try not to, but like, I used to get distracted, and have arguments with teachers. But usually it was stuff that was happening at home, cos I didn't want to act out at home, cos of problems there, so I used to act out here. So I talked to [my mentor] about it and it just sort of helped. Cos I'm not just taking it out on everyone, I'm talking about it. It just helped. Yeah.*

*T: It's very different. She (peripatetic teacher for students with problematic behaviour) looks at just behaviour and modifying behaviour, whereas [my mentor] looks at the whole - behaviour's only a minor thing of what he looks at. They're on it for behaviour, but he looks at the whole picture, which I think is really really useful.*

### "Mentor as Interpreter"

This holistic approach to students with problematic behaviour means that the mentors often see situations differently, and are able to bring a novel perspective to a school that allows an interpretation of the student's situation which may have been affecting behaviour:

*M: I debrief with my liaisons after every session. They're struck by the things the young people are telling me, cos the school has never had any idea what's going on.*

The following case study is a poignant example of this aspect of the role of "mentor as interpreter":

#### *Case Study 1: (Mentor's perspective)*

I [mentor] have been working with S on his attendance and motivation in school. In the beginning of our mentoring sessions he seemed very disengaged and unwilling and often said very little in our sessions. I started to use tools such as conversation cards to help prompt conversation. Towards the middle of our course of mentoring sessions he started to open up more and disclose matters that he never confided to anyone. He told me that he is the main carer for his very poorly mother who is battling for her life from kidney failure and also the main carer to his older brother who is disabled

and is in a wheelchair. He said this is the cause of his lack of motivation in his education, because he needs to be there for his mum and spend the time he has with her now before she dies. He further disclosed that his dad is an alcoholic and his two older sisters are no longer in contact with family due to the family feud. After this he started coming to mentoring continuously, week after week, and used mentoring as a forum to talk about his issues.

Surprisingly the school was unaware of his difficult home life. Now he's getting the help that he needs and his attendance and motivation have also improved. The school behavioural mentor has noticed a major difference in his motivation; he now makes intervention classes after school a priority and revises consistently for his GCSE's starting in May. His attendance at the beginning of the programme was 77% and now it is 90%. In our last session he said to me 'thank you so much, you have no idea how much mentoring has helped me in my academics and even how to deal with my home life. Having you to talk to has made me feel so much better'.

### *Building confidence*

As discussed in the introduction, building confidence and self-esteem, together with associated social and life skill is a key determinant of a young person's life chances even when considered independently of the positive effect it has on achievement. Improving confidence and self-esteem in students is a key part of the mentoring role:

*M: So it's just getting them to a point where they can say something good about themselves, um, even look up. Little things. This is all impacting their education*

*because they just can't open up, or really have a lot of friends. Things like that.*

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*"One of the most important things for me was self-confidence. For students to believe in themselves and for their esteem to grow, and I've noticed that with nearly all of them."*

Mark Samuels, Head of Year 10  
Eastbrook Secondary School, Dagenham.

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This association between confidence and achievement is clear:

*T: It's all about confidence I think. Students who don't attend don't attain, so that's the start. Then it's about that confidence which allows them to start to speak up in class, not to sit right at the back but take part. That's what improves their attainment.*

There are numerous examples in Appendix A of strategies employed by mentors to promote confidence.

Both senior teachers interviewed were asked 'when you look at the students that have been mentored, what do you see?' Their similar responses reinforce this important aspect of the mentoring programme:

*T1: I would say, once again, it's that self-confidence thing, and they seem more self-assured. More to know exactly what they want to do and where they want to go.*

*T2: Right, well one of the most important things for me was self-confidence. Um, students believe in themselves and for their esteem to grow, and I've noticed that with nearly all of them.*

### *Social skills / making friends*

For some of the students, issues of low confidence had affected on their ability to make friends and therefore to enjoy school. For a small number of students who were interviewed, this was the main outcome of being mentored:

*S: Yeah, half the group I didn't really like. I didn't really like half the people in my school to be honest. I was really closed up. I wasn't anti-social, but I was just closed up towards people.*

*A: And mentoring helped you to think they might be alright people?*

*S: Yeah, I was just quite sad before mentoring, but now I'm more confident.*

*S: First of all, I'm being honest, when we first got into our groups, I thought 'it's gonna be really awkward for me, getting on with different people'. As the months have gone on, progressing on, it didn't really turn out that awkward like I was expecting. At first I couldn't get on with no one. But as the months have gone on, I can, which is good in my opinion. And, with that, with M's help as well, from communicating with more people, to carry on making more friends around.*

### *Social and Family Issues*

There was general acknowledgement amongst the mentors that many of the students who had been chosen for mentoring were very troubled, or were coping with difficult circumstances. Mentors spoke of some very serious issues such as child sexual exploitation, self-harming and drug use, but also acknowledged that most students were coping with dysfunctional family relationships.

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*"Before this whole mentoring, and me getting to speak to my dad properly, I didn't speak to him for about a year. So yeah, and this has sort of helped."*

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For most of the students, the mentoring relationship was seen as a neutral space where they could talk about issues outside of school. They appreciated the opportunity to be listened to without judgement, and also sought advice on some family issues:

*S: Not to get too personal, but it's really helpful with my home life especially. Because me and my dad haven't had the best of relationships, because recently he came back to live with us, and this mentoring programme sort of helped me to deal with it. I wouldn't say I'm an aggressive person, but before, I used to be very easily agitated, and violent when unnecessary. This mentoring programme helped me to channel that in the right way.*

Finally, this case study exemplifies the level to which addressing issues outside of the home builds stability for later life and improves attendance and achievement:

#### *Case study 2: (Mentor's perspective)*

S was having difficulties with his attendance (attendance 70%), his timekeeping and anger issues. He had a very violent upbringing due to the volatile relationship with his parents who are now divorced. He is known to social care due to a referral from his junior school and is currently on a Child Protection Plan. His attendance is very poor and he has been arrested several times for selling drugs. He is affiliated to a gang as he feels that this is his "family", as he is provided with everything he needs; money, expensive clothes, and personal support.

My main focus [as his mentor] was to tackle his attendance and timekeeping as I felt that by focusing on this I could work with the school and social care on his relationship with his parents and also try to steer him away from the gang affiliation and selling drugs. We set small targets like focusing on things that he is interested in and doing things with his mother around the home to try to repair the relationship with her. I also introduced him to the army cadets, to take him away from the negative gang affiliation and to focus on being affiliated to something more positive whilst getting him to channel his anger on doing something more positive in the community.

He has now been attending mentoring for the last 6 months and in the last 4 months he has not missed an appointment. His school attendance is now at 93% and he has also made improvements with his timekeeping. At a recent meeting with the head of year, his parents, and social care we noticed that there has been a change in behaviour, his attitude towards school had improved and he is very focused in his lessons. He is currently lead camera person in a school play, his relationship with his mother has got a lot better and she understands the importance of him attending school. He is still on the Child Protection Plan but this is up for review. I feel that S has progressed from the mentoring sessions and is able to set his own positive boundaries.

## Academic Impact

### Attendance

As discussed within the introduction, the relationship between attendance and academic achievement cannot be underestimated [7]. This student's situation shows why:

*S: I would always wake up late, then couldn't get to school on time. Just slow at getting ready.*

*A: Does that get your day off to a bad start?*

*S: If I'm late into a lesson and they've explained what they've got to do, I never know what I'm doing.*

Attendance is a key school-related issue, which is addressed by the mentoring programme, with many students mentioning improving attendance and punctuality as targets set by their mentors. This short case study describes the positive journey of a student who was struggling with attendance:

### Case Study 3: (Mentor's perspective)

I am currently working with S who struggles to attend and be punctual because he has a strong dislike towards school and dislikes being under school authority. His attendance while he was in year 10, before he began mentoring was below 80%. In our first mentoring session he told me that he cannot set a goal or target to try and improve attendance and punctuality because it is very complex and difficult for him. I then began to support him and encourage him to challenge himself and have self-belief. We started to set goals and targets based on attendance and punctuality and also did regular practical activities like using the Eco Map to aid identify what relationships and connections are weak, strong or stressful.

The start of year 11 was the second month mentoring for him. He wanted to challenge himself so he set a goal that by the end of year 11 he wanted to leave school with at least 90% attendance for the whole year. Being focused and determined to achieve his goal, he finished his first term of year 11 with 99% attendance. This was the first time in his secondary school history of completing a full term with 99% attendance.

### *Target Setting and motivation*

As illustrated above, supporting the student to set targets and then supporting them to achieve those targets is the foundation of the developmental aspect of the mentoring relationship. In terms of the mechanism for this behaviour change, students describe a range of motivations. One reason was to make the mentor or a parent proud:

*S3: I think it was just seeing a friendly face that we could trust, that wanted us, that made us want to make our parents proud.*

For some, it seemed that having a straight conversation with an adult who they respected and did not want to disappoint was enough of a motivation for change:

*S1: I used to be bad but now I'm good. I don't have any detentions no more.*

*A: Did you used to have loads?*

*S1: Twice a week, or get a telling off, but I don't have that much anymore.*

*A: What happened?*

*S1: I went to him and he was like 'S, you need to behave yourself, you've got your GCSEs, you need to be mature'. So I said 'yeah, I'll change', and from that moment on I changed.*

*A: People must have said that to you before.*

*S1: Yeah, but I didn't really pick it up, cos like it was like hard to talk to them, sort of, but with M, it was easy to talk to him.*

### *Impact on the school*

The mentoring programme clearly has an effect on the mentored students. Discussions with the two senior teachers and the teacher survey however also made it clear that there are other effects for the wider school, as the students who exhibit more problematic behaviour are supported to change. Improved behaviour of the few has an effect on the learning environment of the many, and there are huge savings in opportunity costs when senior teachers are spending less time and energy dealing with behavioural incidents.

### *Information sharing*

A further process improvement for all concerned is the sharing of information with the school which helps the school to support the student more effectively. This Head of Year describes how much the school value the input of their mentor:

*T2: Once a half term we have our inclusion meeting. We have all the leadership team, the heads of college and the external agencies in to discuss anyone who's receiving an intervention. M has not been able to attend because on the day he's obviously got other schools, but he always sends us a written report which we go through and discuss, which is really good, so everyone's aware of the intervention that he's doing. Particularly this year, it's made a significant difference, and really has impacted on them, but also our relationship with the mentor, and the information both ways. Cos some of the information he's provided with, we wouldn't have had without that.*

This ethos of working closely within the schools' pastoral systems means that, though students' issues are always taken seriously by mentors, the communication with the school limits the risks of students playing mentors off against teachers, as this example illustrates:

*M: Sometimes the students may exaggerate about what's going on at home. Like one of my students was going on about like how his dad was a big drug murderer kind of guy, and yesterday we had a meeting with the Dad at school, and he was fine basically. Because this student lived with his mum before, and his mum passed away, but his mum had no boundaries for him, and he was doing what he wanted, and now he's got a bit of structure in his life, he's like 'nah, I want to go into care'. He's being blowing it out of proportion all this time, and when we met [his Dad], we found that all this time, his Dad just wants the best for him.*

#### *Mentor as mediator*

In some situations however, an aspect of the role emerged whereby the mentor is seen as a neutral party who can advocate for the student directly:

*T2: I think we know exactly what we need to know, and if he has any concerns, which he has done on a couple of occasions, he comes straight to us. And it's been essential that he's done that, because we've then acted on that, and he's been involved in quite a lot of the follow up as well, if he's been available. Fortunately, he's been available to come and deal with the situation, with the assistant head it was actually. They sat there and worked with the boy together I've got nothing but praise for him this year, same with the assistant head and the admin inclusion manager who does all the organisation side of things. Can't sing his praises high enough.*

This role of mediator also arose when the mentor was seen as a neutral outsider by the student, and was able to bring a fresh perspective about how a teacher may have been processing a situation. The following two case studies showcase this clearly:

#### *Case Study 4: (Mentor's perspective)*

S was referred to Lifeline because he was disruptive, angry and de-motivated. He is extremely bright, articulate and engaging. He came through on our activity day as a natural leader and was able to motivate his team mates very easily and was very encouraging to the members of his team that struggled.

He admitted he and his classmates were giving his teacher a hard time as they missed their old teacher, and he felt that the new teacher was picking on him and sending him out of the class when others were more deserving of being sent out. I advised him to speak to his teacher and ask him why; his teacher explained that he only sent him out because he expected more from him as he was capable. However, he felt that he could not really show how bright he was in class as he felt it would make him stand out, so he had to act the clown.

I explained that he should look from a different perspective. What if he showed how bright he was and the others tried to emulate him, that if he started to treat this new teacher with the respect he deserved that the other people in his class would do the same. To further explain this, I gave him a poem by Marianne Williamson. He agreed to give it a try. Over the last couple of weeks, things have changed; he has been moved up to the top set in English, and has also found he has not been so angry in class and has learnt to speak to his teacher in a more professional manner which has resulted in his teacher speaking to him differently. He is still working on his motivation but admits to

things being better both at home and at school because of the new choices he is making. As Nelson Mandela once said,

*“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. You playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine as children do. It's not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own lights shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”*

#### *Case Study 5: (Mentor's perspective)*

S has had some difficulties at school regarding her behaviour. However, I have found her to be very vivacious – she is very outspoken and would like to be a lawyer. She sometimes gets into trouble with members of staff at school and her peers because she is so outspoken. We have been working on her social skills and exploring how she can maintain her personality and make sure her dialogue with others is both effective and appropriate.

She has excellent points in an argument but can let herself down when trying to express herself. Her language can be inappropriate and offensive and she can seem disrespectful when really she just needs to work on her delivery and language. We have also looked at perceptions of what image she is portraying and what she would like people to think when they speak to her. She has enjoyed doing this and is beginning to understand that she needs this skill going into adulthood. We have been using a lot of scenario work where I put her in a situation and ask her how she would communicate her point effectively. A perfect example of this was that both S and the rest of the class had an issue with two teachers who were speaking in their native tongue in front of the class; this caused a lot of upset within the class and S was voted the spokesperson. We discussed this at length as her first attempt had got her into trouble with her teachers. We discussed the situation at our next mentoring session and she asked me to explain what she had done wrong. This was a big step as she had recognised that maybe she had not communicated with her teachers appropriately and she wanted to sound more professional. I used her words and asked her if she would have been happy with being spoken to in that way. S conceded that she would not have liked it. We then explored different ways of asking the teachers not to speak in Arabic in the future and how it had made the class feel without using expletives or inappropriate language. S apologised to her teachers and asked to explain herself again which she did much more effectively. She was heard this time and both teachers and young people came to a peaceful and satisfactory resolution.

#### *Less classroom disruption*

The reduction in classroom disruption as a result of the mentoring programme was a clear wider outcome for other students and teachers:

*T: But I've seen, particularly with one of my students who was very troublesome behaviour wise, I've seen a fantastic improvement in him.*

*S: Some teachers I disagreed with. Then M told me just to keep it in my head, and that got me in less trouble as well.*

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*“I just don't know what it is – you just think of doing something bad, but in your head you just think 'Nah, don't do it'.”*

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S: *I liked it because they made me improve my behaviour in school and my homework and my attitude in food tech.*

*Time saving / economic case*

For the time period where this programme has been evaluated, the contract is externally funded and schools do not contribute financially. The issue of funding was discussed with the two senior teachers, and both were clear that, in terms of quality, the mentoring programme is one they would consider buying in if they had the budget.

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*"If the school has funds to be able to put towards LifeLine mentoring, I'd recommend it. I've been very, very happy that we've had the opportunity to have them in our school for a year and a half. I would recommend to any school to bring in mentoring."*

Both conceded that there were considerable opportunity costs in terms of the workload of senior teachers, which they had saved over the course of the mentoring programme:

Head of Department

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A: *In terms of behaviour, would you say the difference in behaviour has reduced your workload in terms of the number of times you get called to a student? (Asked separately to both senior teachers.)*

T1: *Definitely. As I said, in regards to one student in particular, issues were coming up every other day at the very least with this young man in regards to his general behaviour around the school, not only in classrooms. Um, I would say a good few weeks into doing the mentoring sessions that decreased significantly. So now I'm at a point where there may be an issue once every couple of weeks. At the worst, there's a little thing once a week, which I can speak to him about it and we get past that. Whereas before it was every other day, or every day, so yeah. For some of them it's an ongoing thing. It's not as though now they've got no behaviour issues, but before where there were incidences all the time, now it might be one every few weeks.*

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*"Yeah, I mean, with this one particular student, once or twice a week I would be called to deal with an issue, and by the time I'd spoken to the teacher, spoken to the student, made phone calls, written a report, updated the system, that could take two hours, almost every day. Now I maybe get called once every couple of weeks, and it's not for big things, it's for small things. We're just keeping on top of his behaviour, so it doesn't take me long to sort it out. It's maybe saved me 5 or 10 hours a week just sorting out behaviour for one student."*

Head of Year 11

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## QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION

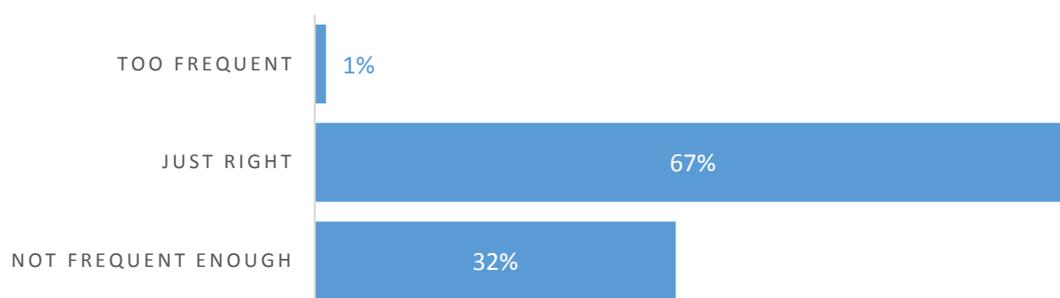
The qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of the programme and its outcomes, the data only represents a sample of the whole cohort. There may have been a sampling bias, as the schools which agreed to host focus groups may have been those with better outcomes and better systems than the overall cohort. To ensure that the outcomes of the programme as a whole could be evaluated, a wide range of quantitative data was also collected. This included an online survey for students and teachers and data in the form of scores on wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and achievement.

### Student and staff surveys

A survey was conducted with all mentored students via survey monkey, asking about their experience and the impact of being mentored on their lives. All but 3 of the 451 students who had been mentored up to this point completed the online survey. 95% of students said they found mentoring helpful and would recommend it to other students. Other survey results are represented below:

#### Frequency of mentoring

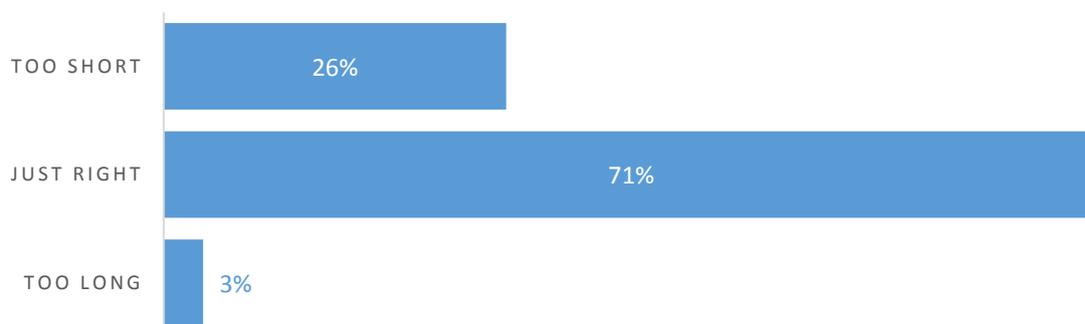
### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF FREQUENCY OF SESSIONS



This presents a slightly different picture from the view presented by the students in the focus groups who unanimously said they felt that mentoring should be more regular.

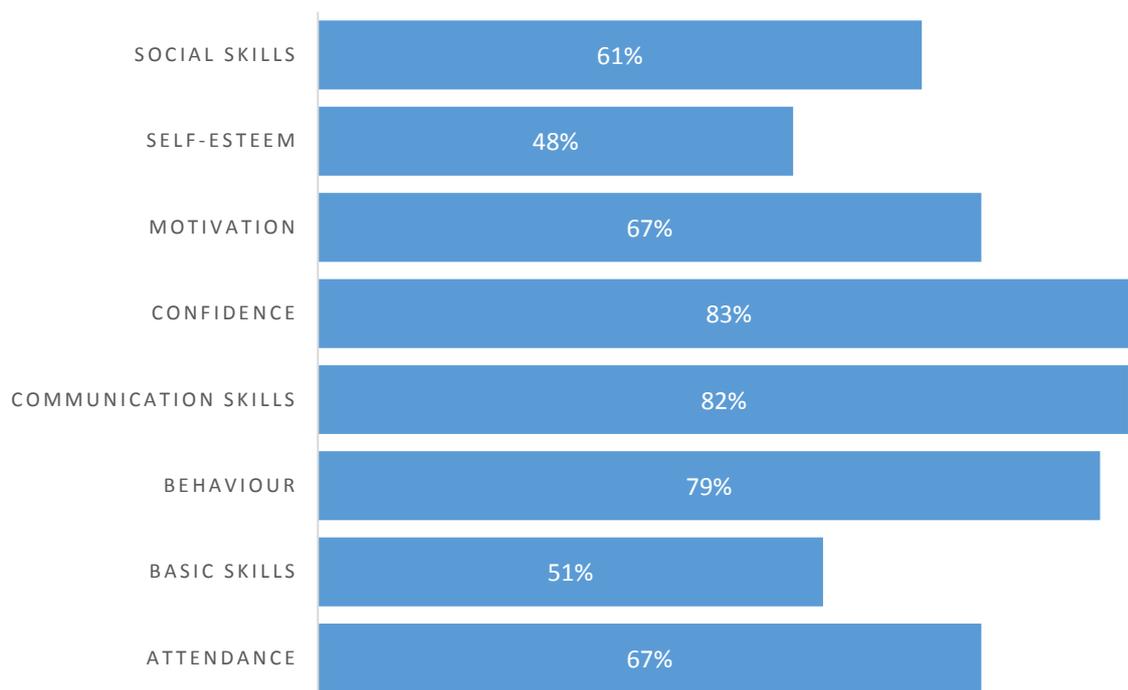
#### Length of mentoring sessions

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF LENGTH OF SESSIONS (%)



This data concurred well with the students questioned at the focus group sessions, in that a small proportion felt that the sessions should have been an hour, but most felt that thirty minutes was about right. All sixteen teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the length of the sessions was appropriate.

## STUDENT-PERCEIVED AREAS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

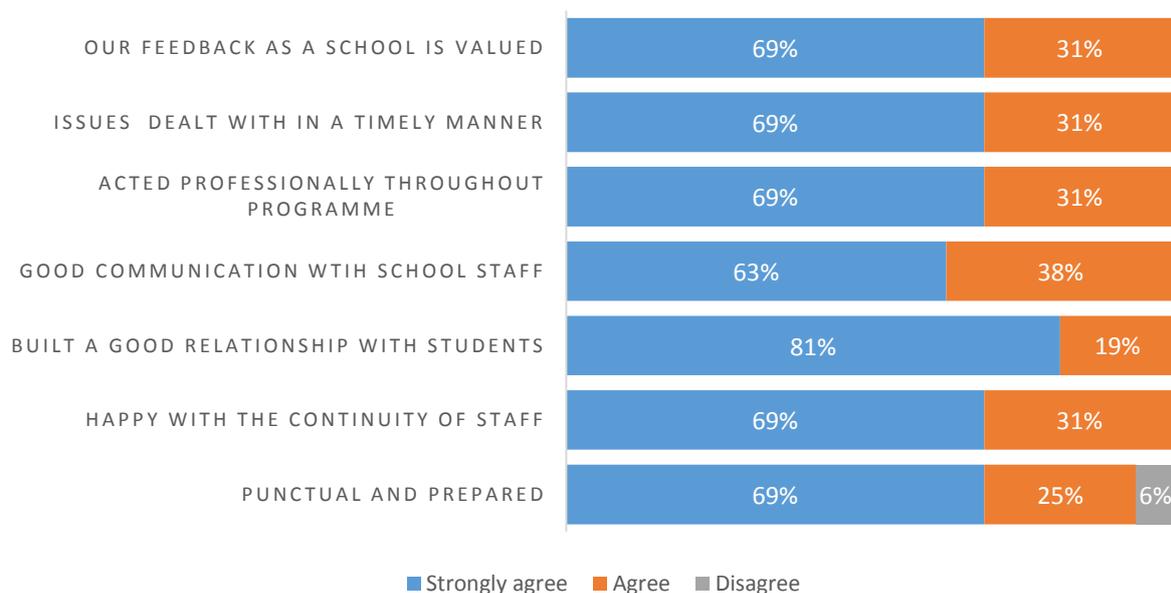


This data shows that the wellbeing benefits of the programme identified strongly within the qualitative data are reflected within the whole student cohort.

### Teacher feedback on the programme

Regarding the way in which the programme was run in the schools, teachers from 16 of the 25 schools engaged by LifeLine responded to an online survey; there was almost universally positive feedback from teachers.

## TEACHER FEEDBACK AREAS



## Student Wellbeing

Students filled in a self-completing Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) at the start of the programme, and at the two data collection points. There was a highly significant difference in scores between the first and last collection point, showing that the mentoring programme significantly improves student wellbeing.

	Start of programme	End of programme	P value of difference using z test
<b>Mean score (C.I)</b>	47.8 (45.7-49.7)	53.4 (51.3-55.4)	P < 0.0001

This improvement in wellbeing is reflected strongly in the qualitative data, with particularly strong improvements in some aspects of wellbeing. The following table shows the mean scores for each of the fourteen questions in the survey, and the difference between the two means.

	Mean score at start	Mean score at end	Difference in means
<b>I've been feeling useful</b>	3.35	3.83	+0.48
<b>I've been feeling relaxed</b>	3.02	3.72	+0.70
<b>I've been feeling interested in other people</b>	3.30	3.70	+0.40
<b>I've had energy to spare</b>	3.35	3.55	+0.20
<b>I've been dealing with problems well</b>	3.35	3.27	-0.09
<b>I've been thinking clearly</b>	3.08	3.62	+0.54
<b>I've been feeling good about myself</b>	3.13	3.62	+0.49
<b>I've been feeling close to other people</b>	3.45	3.70	+0.25
<b>I've been feeling confident</b>	3.68	3.98	+0.30
<b>I've been able to make up my own mind about things</b>	3.45	3.98	+0.53
<b>I've been feeling loved</b>	3.83	4.18	+0.35
<b>I've been interested in new things</b>	3.95	4.10	+0.15
<b>I've been feeling cheerful</b>	3.37	3.95	+0.58
<b>I've been feeling optimistic about the future</b>	3.35	3.83	+0.48

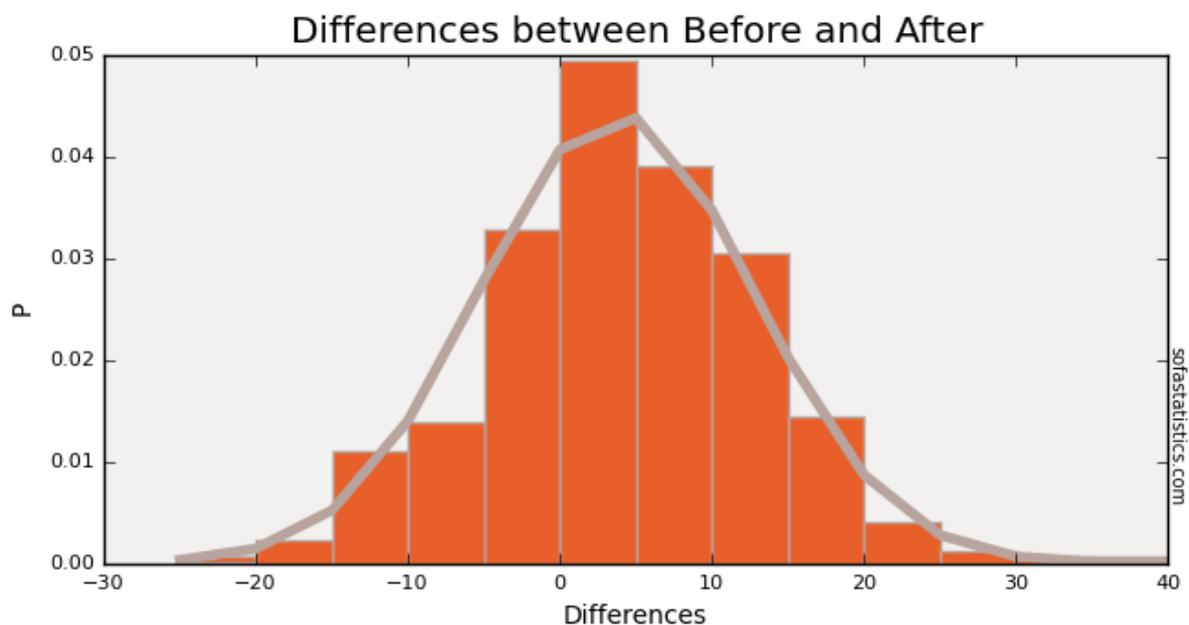
## Further Tests on Wellbeing

Having performed a z-test on the data, further statistical tests were carried out using a Paired Samples t-test on 348 student respondents at a 95% Confidence Interval<sup>1</sup>, comparing the means of scores at the start of the mentoring programme, and again at the end. This method of cumulating all of the individual wellbeing scores is in line with the Warwick and Edinburgh recommendations (Stewart-Brown et al, 2015) [14]. All learners were anonymised, all incomplete data were removed, as well as anywhere there were gaps within the responses.

A null hypothesis was assumed prior to the test, that there was no significant difference in wellbeing scores before and after the intervention. The results were as follows:

Group	N	Mean	CI 95%	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Before	348	49.33	48.478 - 50.189	8.144	26.0	70.0
After	348	53.03	52.064 - 53.999	9.208	22.0	70.0

The t statistic was -7.64, and the p value was less than 0.001. Given that the p value was much less than the prescribed threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it can be confirmed that there is a strong association between the students' wellbeing and their attendance of the mentoring programme. There was no control group for this particular cohort. The overall curve of data was as follows:



<sup>1</sup> The test was carried out again using a 99% CI, with similar results.

### Statistical Tests on Attendance

Statistical tests on attendance were carried for two cohorts: the whole group, and those who had poor attendance records prior to the mentoring. In both cases a paired samples t-test was carried out on the before and after data. In both cases there was the adoption of the null hypothesis, that the mentoring programme made no significant difference to attendance.

#### The Whole Group

As with the WEMWBS data, all incomplete data were removed, and 399 records were parsed through the paired samples t-test at a 95% Confidence Interval. The results for the whole group were as follows:

Group Attendance	N	Mean	CI 95%	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Start	399	90.799	89.722 - 91.876	10.974	10.0	100.0
End	399	89.996	89.015 - 90.977	10.001	22.7	100.0

The t statistic was 1.56 and the p value was 0.118.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld, and it could be concluded that the mentoring programme had no effect on the attendance of the students as a whole.

#### Students with habitually poor attendance

The second statistical test was carried out on students who had a poor record of attendance (below 80%). There were 54 students in total. Again a paired samples t-test was carried out with a 95% Confidence Interval, with a null hypothesis stating that the mentoring programme made no difference to this particular cohort. The results were as follows:

Group Attendance	N	Mean	CI 95%	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Start	49	67.724	64.049 - 71.399	13.125	10.0	79.1
End	49	77.242	73.027 - 81.457	15.054	22.7	100.0

The t statistic was -3.26 and the p value was 0.002.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it can be said that for the students who had a poor attendance record, the mentoring made a significant difference. There was no control for this group.

## Attendance, Behaviour and Achievement

Quantitative data to measure the effect of the mentoring programme on attendance, behaviour and achievement were collected in three ways; students' self-reporting via an online survey, teachers reporting via an online survey, and school monitoring data. Significantly, out of the 16 teachers who completed the survey, there was a strongly positive perception regarding the benefits of the programme.

	<b>Student self-reporting</b>	<b>Teacher feedback</b>	<b>School monitoring data</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	When asked whether they felt that mentoring had improved their attendance, 79% of students self-reported some degree of improvement.	When teachers were asked whether students being mentored improved their attendance, 69% agreed or strongly agreed. Of the remainder, only one teacher disagreed.	Despite student and teacher perceptions, and the abundance of references to improved attendance within the qualitative data, school attendance records do not show changes in attendance for mentored students. See discussion.
<b>Behaviour</b>	When asked whether they felt that mentoring had improved their behaviour, 89% of students self-reported some degree of improvement.	When asked whether mentored students had improved their behaviour, 75% of teachers, representing 12 of the 16 schools who responded, agreed, with 8 (50%) 'strongly agreeing' that mentored students had made 'significant improvements' on the programme.	For the schools for whom data were complete, there were significant improvements in behaviour in all categories; detentions, reports, inclusion days and exclusion days.
<b>Attainment</b>	When asked whether their grades had improved as a result of mentoring, 86% of students self-reported positively.	When asked whether students being mentored improved their academic achievement, 69% agreed or strongly agreed.	Data was not available

## DISCUSSION

The clear and consistent message, both from the highly significant change in mean WEMWBS scores, the reduced number and severity of behavioural incidents, the student and teacher feedback, and the stories from the mentors and students themselves is that the LifeLine V.I.P. mentoring programme strongly improves adolescent wellbeing and behaviour. The literature on the benefits of improved wellbeing in young people is compelling, and argues that these wellbeing outcomes such as confidence, self-esteem and resilience are of such vital importance that caution must be used in classifying them as 'soft outcomes', with the tacit implication that they are of less worth. For example Carneiro et al [2] argue that whereas academic improvement benefits the most able students, personal and social development benefit the less able, or those from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds, and because social and emotional skills are more open to development than academic skills during adolescent years [5], this gives additional force to the argument that they should be highly valued as part of secondary schooling.

This is salient when one considers the current repositioning of public health, and particularly the wellbeing agenda, within the local authority, with the vision of Public Health England's Outcomes Framework to "improve and protect the nation's health and wellbeing, and improve the health of the poorest fastest" [13]. In this respect, Margo and Sodha [3] show that psychological wellbeing is the single most powerful factor in social mobility, whereby individuals with strong non-academic abilities are more likely to succeed despite disadvantage. With ever increasing inequalities within society, and the health and social effects that these inequalities have on individuals and society as a whole, including the huge financial burden of health inequalities, interventions with such inarguable benefits to adolescent wellbeing should increasingly be at the top of the agenda for both practitioners and commissioners alike.

The qualitative data provides strong evidence of improved attendance, although this is not reflected in the statistical data provided by schools. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Some of the school data may be of poor quality and not a true representation of actual attendance data, or it may be that students' actual attendance does not improve overall; but there are such marked improvements in behaviour and confidence when in school, that teachers' perceptions of students' performance as a whole do not distinguish between attendance and other positive outcomes.

### Success criteria

Within the qualitative data, a number of strong themes were identified as processes or strategies which were keys to success:

- Having a champion within the school who understood the benefits of the programme and could communicate that to other staff. In schools with this strong relationship, students gained more from the programme, as it was incorporated strategically into the timetable, and there was a strong flow of communication between the mentor and the champion which led to effective reinforcement of the targets set and messages communicated by the mentor. This was particularly strong in the school where the electronic attendance and behaviour monitoring data was sent to the mentor ahead of the sessions.

- Having wider understanding amongst school staff as to the nature and aims of the programme. Although having a champion was vital, there were examples of schools where wider teaching and non-teaching staff were obstructive because of a lack of vision about what the programme could offer.
- A clear understanding by LifeLine management of the skill mix needed for the mentoring role, and recruiting with this in mind. This combination of being an excellent communicator with young people, being able to relate in a professional manner to schools and managing administrative tasks efficiently were clearly articulated personal attributes, and recruitment reflected this.
- Excellent systems of one-to-one individual and group supervision were valued highly by all levels of staff as a means of debriefing, reflecting and gaining insight from the supervisor or the group of mentors.
- An individualised approach to mentor training, so that each mentor's learning needs were considered and catered for within the training programme.
- Teamwork was explicitly stated as an important value for the organisation as a whole, and this was reflected strongly both within the mentoring team, and within the programme with the students.
- The group activity days were highlighted by the vast majority of students as enjoyable and key to developing relationships and building confidence.
- The structure of having a period of monthly mentoring after the more intensive two terms of weekly mentoring, though a spin-off of a solution to a logistical issue with the contract, proved an important way to wind down the mentoring relationship.

## Recommendations

A number of logistical recommendations have emerged from the qualitative aspect of this evaluation, which should be considered for feasibility within the organisation:

- There is a need for wider recognition and understanding of the programme within schools, not just by the champion. Therefore, mentors should be given the opportunity to give a short presentation at staff training days, and this could be incorporated into the partnership agreement when schools are engaged.
- The overwhelmingly positive feedback from students about the group activity sessions is compelling. It is recommended that more of these group sessions are embedded into the programme's core offer.
- There was strong evidence of the positive impact that the programme can have on family relationships, and some anecdotal evidence that more direct involvement with parents may benefit these relationships further. It is therefore recommended that activities which could strengthen this aspect of the programme be considered.
- There was a mismatch within the data around the effect of the programme on attendance. In order to resolve this issue, it is recommended that current processes for collecting percentage data from schools are reviewed with a view to exploring this anomaly.
- The potential benefit of the this programme for young people attending colleges within the post-16 cohort is considerable, since these students are often in lower achieving groups, which have been shown to benefit more from interventions around improving wellbeing. New strategies for engaging these institutions could be considered, including financial incentives.

- With the overwhelming evidence for the success of this programme in improving young people's wellbeing and behaviour, the main recommendation is that this programme is given sustained funding to create a sustainable model within schools, in line with the Department of Education's recommendation that in order to better reach their potential, some students will need enhanced support.
- With this sustained model in place, the following value would be added to the programme which would undoubtedly lead to even more successful outcomes:
- More sustainable funding would result in the recruitment and retention of high quality mentors. Though the recruitment process is robust, the short term nature of the contracts means that the requirement to recruit the best quality mentors has to be balanced against the short time scales to roll out the programme. With sustained funding, this pressure would be reduced and better job security would mean better retention of mentors, who were sometimes lost to more permanent positions. Having mentors in post for longer could allow them to develop specialisms within the team such as young parents, ESOL or youth offending leads, to liaise with other services and advise and support colleagues.
- With a sustained presence in a school, the director expressed his vision for the establishing of an alumni organisation. In this way, young people who go on to further education and employment could continue to be involved in the programme as role models to those being mentored, and act as advocates for the programme beyond their attendance at school.
- With a consistent presence in the school over a number of years, whereby the mentor is still accessible to previously mentored students, the sense of abandonment expressed by some students on completion of mentoring could be minimised.
- On a more macro level, establishing this role of mentor within schools could add significantly to the overall emotional wellbeing and resilience of adolescents, which would then affect the health, social and employment outcomes for young people leaving statutory education.

## APPENDIX A

This part of the paper has been included for those who wish to read the qualitative research part of the evaluation in more depth. The same theme and subtheme headings will be used, but without accompanying narrative text.

### Structure and process: How does the programme work?

#### The role and experience of the mentor

##### *Recruitment and Training*

*D: We've done recruitment a couple of different ways, but most recently, we've brought ten youth workers in at a time for an assessment. They deliver a group activity to the other youth workers, so then we can assess their group work skills. Then we give them a scenario to work through on a one-to-one setting with another candidate, and we observe that. Then we give them an admin exercise based on the admin that we have to do. Following that, after seeing who's got through phase one, we do a series of interviews. The assessment is half a day, so that means we could see twenty in a day. So we're dealing with large numbers to sift through to find the right candidates.*

*T1: Hopefully we can keep M in to the future, cos he's been really brilliant and really perfect for the cohort. They really like him and they open up to him. Some of them do comment, when they miss their session, they'll come and say 'I missed it, can I come at lunch time?' Not many students, at the end of the day, would give up their lunch to go and see someone.*

*T2: The students that have taken part in the mentoring process with M have all progressed really well. I've been impressed by the way M relates to the students, definitely.*

*D: ...and if we took them, that assessment day would start the first bit of training. We'd score them and just because they did badly in an area, it wouldn't necessarily mean we didn't take them, cos beyond skills we were looking for right sort of person. We'd look at the points that were weaker on the assessment day or interview, and we'd look to address those in the training.*

##### *Management structure / supervision*

*TL: I'm responsible for five youth development workers in my team; responsible for their daily operation, ensuring they are delivering a good quality services in schools to the students. I touch base with them every day just to make sure they haven't got any issues or problems in the school. Also they might have problems, say with a safeguarding issue with the student, so they will liaise back to me and just inform me of the situation. We then would discuss as a team or I would take it to management, and we'll decide where to take it or what steps or processes we might need to put in place. Yeah so that's my sort of daily role.*

*M: We're mentally drained. Cos we do have a lot of complex stuff that we're dealing with these young people.*

*TL: Yeah definitely it (one-to-one supervision) gives a lot of chance to offload - talk about issues that I didn't even know were present so it's good ... like I found out a lot of things yesterday from one of my mentors about his self-harming student that he wasn't able to discuss with*

*the group there... so on a one-to-one he was able to disclose a lot more which I think it is quite vital...*

*TL: The team is absolutely fantastic. It's the Wednesday all together that makes the team so strong and it is a very isolated job so I think that is quite beneficial that we all do get along so well...*

*M: We do it (group supervision) with our manager; we go through some of our cases, and see how we can support each other, and that's really good, really positive.*

*D: Supervision is important because it's the application of how we do VIP and the function of team. They're working in very individualised ways, but one of our organisational values is about team, so it's really important that we give them a place for that to work out. So they're all in the office on a Wednesday, so that they don't feel too isolated, and that's where the team meetings and one-to-one supervisions go on. And we do group supervisions, so they can contribute to what's going on, so it's not just about them and their young people, its more.*

*M: At the start of the programme, there's a form they fill in, for them (students) to tick the box if you want things you share to be shared with the other mentors. So for example, if a student wanted to do music gigs but I don't know anything about it, I can say to the other mentors 'I've got a student who wants to do music gigs. Does anyone know anything going on?' So the whole team can feed back to me, and I can feed it back to the student.*

*T: last year we had a mentor who they let go because he wasn't up to standard. He just wasn't fitting their requirements. To be honest, we were looking at not using LifeLine again. And then M started – she was so good, and organised, and everything changed, and we were really happy. They're really on the ball now. Really pleased.*

#### *Workload / Job satisfaction*

*TL: Yeah I absolutely love my job, absolutely love it.*

*M: Yeah, it's really satisfying.*

*M: Hearing 14/15 year olds saying it's good to have someone to talk to, other than the teacher. Or 'I want longer sessions', you really feel like you're making an impact, and its good.*

*D: There's the group work, there's the mentoring, there's the admin. Due to the funding, there's an awful lot of paperwork needs to be completed.*

*M: So each time you meet, you fill in a form, for each session. Afterwards. You'll hear from them, and you might make a couple of bullet points, then you just fill it in. The child has to sign. Then there's the child reviews, and they might be monthly or fortnightly, and we have to do them, but that depends on the contract you're doing.*

*D: We wanted them to start knowing what they were coming to, so that's why the interview is so good and the assessment day so important, cos then they knew what the job was going to be, and we'd explain to them it requires all these elements, and that's what you're going to be doing*

D: *We've got a day a week on a Wednesday to catch up on admin, and we don't get 100% student turn out rate - the average is about six a day. Now I'd give some room because if a young person doesn't turn up, you've got to go and find them, there's lots of faffing around, but I think there's time to do their admin in the day. Plus, the school day finishes at 3 or 3.30; we work til 4.30 or 5, so there's lots of time there.*

M: *It's not as easy. And at the moment, there's a lot of paper work which is being demanded, and they've added a lot of paperwork on top, and we're trying to approach the head of year etc, and we're trying to explain this to management.*

M: *I'm emailing her as well, but because she's the head of year as well, and she teaches, it's kind of difficult, so it's trying to find the best way, and we get pressured - 'you need to see them, you need to see them,' but it's difficult, we try.*

M: *Yeah, about the evaluation forms, even though it's a lot of work to do, it's good for us to see the feedback, to see what they're saying. And maybe that's what those teachers who aren't respecting it need to see.*

### *Going above and beyond*

D: *Some partners have gone light touch on it, and have gone for our minimum that we've stipulated them to do, but even that is higher than what the SFA stipulates*

M: *So there's a student I've got; the school's given up on them so they've taken them off of the programme but I still see the student around the school so I still chat with them for 5-10 minutes - make sure he's OK.*

M: *Ah I wish I could (continue to support the student)... see how he is.... he pops in at lunch time so I make sure everything's alright with him so yeah it is good...*

S: *Yeah if its break time, we just pop in, and say 'hello M'.*

S: *We see him when he's here on Mondays working with someone else. Yeah, not us*

M: *I think it's important that management understand the complexities we have to go through to get that stuff done.....cos they might see on the spreadsheet that we've seen four kids, but they don't know that we've seen another two kids that have come in on their lunch break.*

M: *The stats might not seem related to what we're actually doing. Cos we do go over and beyond what we do, but they can't actually see it.*

M: *So they need to realise that at times we're mentally drained. Cos we do have a lot of complex stuff that we're dealing with with these young people, and at the end of the day, I know we only get half hour sessions, but we can't stop them talking and say 'do you know what, your time's up, you gotta go.'*

### *Defining the role*

D: *They also need to be appealing to a school. So, engaging to a young person for the one-to-one and the group work, but also, if they're too rough and ready, the school's not going to necessarily like them. So we've gone for more of a professional type youth worker than an estate-based or an outreach type youth worker.*

- T: *I've been impressed by the way M relates to the students in particular. When he first came in, a couple of them weren't too sure how it was gonna go down, but his personality came through to them. A lot of kids in this particular area like down to earth adults. They find it hard to relate to teachers or adults who seem to, I don't know, have money, or come from different areas, so someone like M was on their level, and I think that's what's made it easier for them to open up.*
- S: *I see him more as a good friend than a counsellor or mentor. Sort of like, I don't know, there's something that makes us able to confide in him, and the other mentors we've worked with as well. They kind of bring something new to the table that we can't have with our teachers, or like with our parents or with our friends. It's like that perfect in the middle of a friend, a teacher and a parent, just that perfect guidance.*
- S: *The fact that he does that with us, when he talks to us, he relates it to his own life, it makes us sort of feel involved. Like I know he's trusting us as we're trusting him, cos he's telling us about his personal life as well, like how it affected him. And that's like what makes the bond stronger with us.*
- S: *Like, teachers aren't allowed to get that involved. They can only tell us the 'by the book' way to do things.*
- S: *And he lets you talk about football...sometimes you have stuff in common with him.*
- A: *So does he open up about himself as well?*
- S: *Yeah, sometimes. Not that much.*
- S: *He knows how to do it like, professional in a way, but he knows when to joke and when not to joke.*
- S: *I'd say it's like counselling but without all the iffy bits, so like without making us feel like we're crazy. It's really helpful, and I'm sort of progressing without being too worried about how it may, not have repercussions, but like, how it affects us. Cos some people have counselling sessions and that, and all of a sudden, that's what their life becomes, that's who they become – that person that has counselling. This is more sort of like, don't know how to put it, kind of like teaching with a friend, that's what it feels like.*

### **Logistics of engagement of schools**

- D: *Having monthly mentoring at the end is an unintended consequence, but I like it and I've built it into our programmes now because I think it tapers off the support for the young person. What I also like is when we take on another cohort in the school, we're still present in the school, so the young people can pop in, so we try to do that as much as possible. As soon as we start working in a school, I want to work in that school for as long as possible, because then, even in a year's time, a young person who received mentoring a year ago, they've still got that relationship with the mentor. They can still pop back and chat to them.*

### **Relationship with the school**

*A strong mutually respectful relationship between LifeLine and the school emerged strongly as a criterion for success for the programme. The two schools where focus groups and staff interviews took place were by default those with whom LifeLine has stronger relationships, and thus reflected better practice, but this was balanced by accounts by some mentors of*

*their experiences in other schools. The stronger relationships were firmly based on an appreciation of the respective roles, and the involvement of a strong champion from the school; something absent within the schools with a weaker relationship with LifeLine, as the following participants explain:*

- M: Personally I work quite closely with the head of year at the school that I'm at. I think that's vital because they are like the pastoral leader of that school and that year group, and everything I do I will liaise with the head of year... (when asked about involvement with other agencies) ... if I did need to get in contact with social services or the ed. psyche or an agency she will always be happy to help me.*
- M: I put it more down to with the school. It does depend on the school and how you build that relationship with the liaison.....the school absolutely love me, like I'll go through the school and I'll have year 7's coming to talk to me, the head of year 9 talks to me .... I've got a really good relationship with that school. But then last year when I was in another school - absolutely nothing! I could go through that school and they wouldn't even look at my badge and didn't even know where I was. It really does depend on the school...*
- T: Yeah, I think most of the communication now is through our mentor. In terms of the management of LifeLine, he came in and met us, and then really just checks up every now and then. If we've got any problems, we can contact them.*
- M: Some schools I honestly think don't see the point of us. And in the hierarchy of the schools we're very low down their list. They don't what we're doing, they don't know what our role is, so they see as it as you come into school and you're taking this kid out of class from year 10 or year 11 every week.*
- M: Yeah, like the other day, these teachers asked us 'are you students?', and we had our badges on. So they're obviously not aware of what we're doing, and we've been there since January.*
- D: We were trying to get another cohort from that school. Trying trying trying, but no response. But the person we'd been dealing with had gone off on long term sick. So if someone goes off with stress or for maternity leave, the programme really wobbles. In one of the best schools we were in, that happened. We were about to pull out, and someone came back from maternity, and it's all hunky dory again. So the relationship with that head of year is really key. And you can understand if a head of year goes off on long term sick, and someone's covering their role, they don't have time to do the additional things. In one school, it had a bad start. They were just really difficult to work with. I'd met the head, and I liked the head, but that wasn't who we were working with. It was the deputy. He just didn't pay attention to the programme. I get quite frustrated when a school commits, and we meet with them, and they commit to the weekly mentoring, and then they don't value that.*
- M: I kind of know how teachers would feel - I would have been the same when I was teaching, like 'why are you taking the student out of my lesson when they've got coursework, they've got exams, so they need to be here'. But then, I sort of done mentoring in my school so I was aware of the importance of actually these students, they actually do need that half an hour so that it improves their learning and behaviour in a lesson, so there's a benefit. But a lot of teachers wouldn't see it like that, they would just see 'we need to get the grades, we're getting Ofsteded, we're getting pressure from higher up in the school, we need to get grades,*

*hit targets'. So teachers are more that kind of mindset; a lot of teachers just don't understand that there's a lot more to it than just that.*

*M: I think like, cos schools get inset days, that's a chance for us to go in, so the staff can know us. Not just one person, because one person might know what we do, but other people don't. So yesterday for example, I called up the receptionist and said 'I've got a student whose not here' and they were like 'oh, this is like the 5th time you've called us since you've been at the school. Why don't you do it yourself?' And I'm like 'I don't know the timetable, I don't know the school. And I really need to see the student'. And they're like 'Err, we can't be leaving our desk, can't be doing this for you.' So I think if everyone knew what we were doing, there would be a bit more support from the whole of the teaching staff and non-teaching staff. So I think if we did go in on inset day, we could explain it more, make them more aware of why we're there, of what we do.*

#### *Recruitment and retention of students*

*T: One of them was for low self-esteem, and one's a bit new to the country. So it's not all about behaviour. We asked the heads of college for suggestions and looked at people academically, as well as for behaviour.*

*M: It's a mixture. Behaviour, confidence, self-esteem*

*M: Yeah, lots of low confidence in the girls I work with. Very, very shy.*

*TL: 90% of it is the factual database of attainments, attendance behaviour and detentions etc. but then there are some that are doing amazingly well with attainments and stats but then have low self-esteem or confidence issues.*

*A: So can you choose not to go if you don't want to go?*

*S1: Nah, we have to go*

*S2: I didn't go*

*S1: I think you get in trouble if you don't go*

*M: Yeah, some of my kids I haven't seen since I started. It's a mix of problems. They could be excluded, and when they get back, the teachers won't let them come out the lesson. And sometimes, to be honest, they don't want to come to a session. I always tell my kids 'don't force it'. I want you to be here if you want to be here. Don't just come and be here cos that teacher told you you've got to come. If one week you say 'I'm not really feeling it this week', that's ok, come next week. So as long as you have the relationship with them.*

#### *Most appropriate year group*

*D: The youngest we can work with is year 10. We could work with anyone older than that. We prefer not to because we want to go as preventative as possible, so with less intervention you can have a greater impact if you catch people earlier. Also, if you're working with year 11 students, that gets really difficult school-wise. In terms of kids with bad behaviour, by the time they get to year 11, they're no longer in school. If they are in school, the school is focussed on them taking their GCSEs; they're not very willing to release them to go to mentoring. If the young person hadn't turned around in year 10, then they'd probably be at college now.*

*D: We could work with colleges, but we haven't had any response from the colleges. Colleges don't, in my opinion, have a pastoral network like the schools do. They have huge dropouts. You could argue that's because they get the kids that are essentially dropping out of school, or you could argue that they don't have the pastoral support systems that schools have. But the fact that we've found no-one who can even engage in a conversation about trialling the mentoring with the colleges seems to me to suggest where their focus and interest lies.*

*M: I think leaving year 6 starting year 7 would be ideal. For me year 7 would be ideal.*

*T: But certainly, if they were looking for things to improve, or change, accessing them younger would be even better. I mean, we could easily fill, in terms of places, double that if we could go for any year group.*

*A: What age do you think students should start to have a mentor?*

*S1: As soon as they start playing up.*

*S2: In year 7 everyone was pretty good, trying to fit in.*

*S3: I was alright in year 7, but year 8 and year 9, and at the start of this year it was just awful.*

*M: I think if we're working with the lower age group, we would have got to them before they got to that point, and they wouldn't be at risk of so much problems. So years 7 to 9 is a lot easier.*

*M: I personally think that year 10 is a tricky year group, cos teachers are wanting them to sort out their grades to see what they're sets are gonna be, what they're gonna be sitting for GCSE – it's a crucial time with a lot of work. I do think though that some year 10's really need the support, and we are helping, but it's just really difficult when it comes to deadlines and paperwork. That's really difficult. But I do feel like I'm making an impact in their lives. They need it just as much as a year 7 would need it. But I think just in terms of collecting the data and all that stuff, it would be easier if it was a lower year group.*

*S: I think it finished at the wrong time. We're just about to do our GCSE exams, and that's like the most stressful, and things are building up on top of us, and we won't know how to handle things, and we sort of need that guidance. It's not there anymore. It's like someone teaching you, guiding you how to do something, and then when it comes to the actual thing, they're not there to help you. I know it's not his fault, but it's a sense of abandonment – that's how we feel.*

### *Regularity of mentoring*

*S: Twice a week. Monday and Friday. Set your goals on Monday and try and reach them by Friday.*

*S: I'd change the times to see him. Not once a month, maybe twice a week.*

### *Strategies for engagement of young people*

#### *Group activity*

*S: Yeah, it builds up your confidence for the whole year because if you're not getting along with someone, and they've been like, you haven't been mates with them for a couple of years and that, and then you're in a team with them, you become more closer. And then, I'd say you'd probably behave better in lessons cos you'd say to your mates 'come on, let's just do well'.*

S1: Sick day it was actually.

S2: A fun day, yeah.

A: Has it made you a bit more of a group?

S's: Yeah yeah

S1: *I dunno, when you're with that environment and that, it's hard to explain, you feel that, when you're around them type of people, the mentors, and you're doing the fun stuff, playing football, leisure stuff, you feel like you don't have to think about the bad stuff, you can just let it all go. You feel happy.*

S2: *Yeah and you feel free, you've got loads of freedom and that. Makes you want to come to school as well.*

D: *They have to do a group work activity for the young people, and that's not easy, that's not just going into school and working with a group. That's working with a group of the ten most difficult kids in a year group, bringing them all together for a whole day when you don't know them. So that's a challenging piece.*

TL: *They do a group session at the beginning of the program, group activities to take them out of their comfort zones - we get them to do activities to basically get a general understanding of what they're like and how they interact within a group, because students often interact differently in a group session than they do in a -one-to-one session.*

S: *More activity days. Cos we've only had one.*

S: *He said we could have one at the end. He said it might be at Stubbers.*

S: *If more activity days happened, it would be better.*

S: *We did that whole day, leisure stuff and that, and that was really fun, and that like just got all the bad stuff out of us, and just made us enjoy life and that, and if err, there was more of them, even if two times a month.*

TL: *In terms of the role and the team and how we deliver the program I think there needs to be a group activity at the end that needs to be more structured...so the one at the beginning is compulsory but I think the one at the end needs to be compulsory as well.... so it gives children the opportunity to show their development as well because how they were at the beginning should be totally different to how they are at the end. So I think that should be made more compulsory into the program...*

### Individualised approach / Innovation

M: *We've got work sheets, but obviously where we've got our own past work experience, we've got some other things we can bring as well ... like I've got some cards I use, but I've got them from a previous mentoring role I done, so bits like that.*

M: *But most of the time it's not even about worksheets, it's about our experiences. Yeah. That's how they like to learn, so it's not really about work sheets. Most of the time, I do the register, then that's it. I talk to them face to face, more than doing work sheets and typing when we're talking.*

- M: Yeah, we have a wide catalogue of resources we can use, so we can tap into that if we need it.*
- M: We haven't got a structured guideline with what to do. We more play it like ear with the student with what sort of works.*
- M: With the worksheets, you work on certain things with them, not all of them. Some of the resources we do have, you wouldn't use them with everyone; you know when to use it.*
- M: Yeah. I mean it's nice going in with a bit of structure, but then it's nice going in and just having the conversation, then you pick up on certain things, and we add more, you know, certain words as prompts. And they start opening up and giving us a bit more information, and that's what we find it's not just what's going on inside of school, it's what's going on outside of school.... and in their heads as well.*
- M: Yeah a couple of my students had like really severe anger issues so I contacted a local Barking and Dagenham boxing gym and they've been going boxing. Now one of them goes to an MMA club doing martial arts and they feel its helps them release their anger and channel their confusion and frustrations.*
- M: For example, one of my kids, instead of just sitting in a room talking every week, once a month, maybe we go into the gym and he does boxing sessions or stuff, or another activity.*
- TL: One of my mentors has gone out of his way to do like a mock interview set up with all his year 10 students and that was really good. The teachers loved it and they said their students had gone on their actual interviews for work experience, and they've all got a job so that's really good.*
- M: One of my other students wants to join the cadets, for voluntary policemen, and I realised that one of my other students, in my others schools, was already in the cadets. So I asked my other student details of how to do it, who to contact, and I fed that back to my other student and he got through.*
- M: For my students, one of them is really into music, so at the moment I'm actually trying to find some gigs that he can go to, cos he wants to kind of get himself into the music industry, so I've been looking at ways of how he can do that. And another student really loves football, so we looked at football coaching that he could do as well. So yeah, we look for opportunities for them. One of my students wanted to volunteer at a charity, so we looked at different charities in the area, to get you into volunteering. It's very flexible. If the young person says they want to do something, we'll try and do what we can.*
- M: But it's just time.*
- M: Yeah, cos that takes time to prepare. Especially if you've got forty kids - I think I'm only giving my time to like seven properly, helping them with media stuff, so it's very hard when you've got forty, but all we can do is try.*
- S1: He gives us targets. We have a league. We have our own names, and whoever gets the least behaviour points and most credits, you go up by like 3 points.*
- S2: That makes us wanna do well.*

S3: *Whoever gets top of the league, you get a prize.*

T: *The league helps – they're all keen to get their points up the league, and I think being an all boys group, um, that competitive edge really makes a difference.*

T: *We give him everything in advance, so he's got it before he comes, and he knows if anyone's been in isolation or excluded so he knows what we're dealing with. In terms of good practice, without that electronic behaviour system we've got, although we're not unique in that, he'd be kind of left in the blind as to what, how their week's gone, cos they're not going to tell him what's gone on.*

S1: *He checks the system.*

S2: *He has like everything we've done.*

S3: *It's every single B1 (behaviour point) you've got (laughs).*

### Communication

M: *I have a game that I use sometimes with students whose self esteem might be a bit low, and it's called 'He is, she is'. What we do is I get them to write positive adjectives about themselves, and I write some. And then, give it about 2 minutes, and then we swap, and see how many of our adjectives match. And the first time we do it, they might have 3, and I might have 10 or 12. And then we'll go through the matching ones. Then I say 'ok, well these are the ones I've found', and they're like 'really, I'm like that?' and you can see them kind of just sit up a little bit straighter because someone said 'you're kind, you're always friendly, you're never rude', that kind of thing, and its stuff that they don't naturally see in themselves, and as M says, they're not mature enough to see that they do actually have all these qualities, and it takes someone else looking from outside to say 'this is you'.*

M: *S is a good student. He is quite shy and needs to build his confidence which is why he has been referred. At first it was hard to start a conversation and keep it going. At our third meeting I used my 'Let's Talk' cards - these cards have various topics of conversation printed on the back and S picked 'what kinds of music do you like?' He assured me that I would not like the music he liked which was rap. I replied 'I like rap, I like Jayze and Nas and even Eminem'. He said Eminem was his favourite rapper and asked me why I liked Eminem. I said because he uses his music as therapy to get rid of all the stuff that he has been through and is still working through and gets paid for it, and to me that's clever. He said he had never looked at his music like that but that it was true as most of what Eminem writes about is past experiences which are what makes him so great.*

### Impact – What does the programme achieve?

#### Behavioural Impact

S: *Usually, I used to just get in trouble cos I never used to talk to people about why I used to do it. Then I just talked about it and it helped. Just calmed down a bit.*

S: *Dunno, I'd try not to, but like, I used to get distracted, and have arguments with teachers, but usually it was stuff that was happening at home, cos I didn't want to act out at home, cos of problems there, so I used to act out here, so I talked to M about it and it just sort of helped. Cos I'm not just taking it out on everyone, I'm talking about it. It just helped. Yeah.*

S: *Yeah, cos if you didn't have him, you wouldn't have talked to anyone about stuff and you probably wouldn't have changed.*

T: *It's a very different. She (peripatetic teacher for students with problematic behaviour) looks at just behaviour and modifying behaviour, whereas M looks at the whole - behaviour's only a minor thing of what he looks at. They're on it for behaviour, but he looks at the whole picture, which I think is really really useful.*

### *Mentor as Interpreter*

M: *For me, it's mostly issues outside of school, and that affects them in school. Obviously the school don't know that, they just see them as a 'bad kid', and put them on report and stuff like that, but they don't know the background stuff. They don't know WHY they're being like that if you know what I mean. So, for us it's a good job we're doing, just to have some kind of feedback.*

M: *We ask them 'what would you feel comfortable talking to your mentor about', and most of them tick 'everything', and sometimes, cos I do debrief with my liaisons after every session, they're struck by the things the young people are telling me, cos the school has never had any idea what's going on.*

M: *You get a lot of 'my teacher hates me, she tells me just to get out', or 'she don't like me' and I said to them perhaps what you need to do is reframe. Don't have the dialogue in front of the whole class because no-one wants to back down. The teacher won't want to back down, the young person won't. Its pride isn't it. I said, what you do is at the end, you go back and say 'when you said that to me, it made me feel', cos once you said that to someone – it made me feel – they have to deal with it, because they can't diminish your feelings. We had one incident where a girl was like, every day 'she yelled at me, and I told her to f off, blah blah.' And I said that to her, I said, just try it, and she did. And the following week when we had our session, she said 'Miss, I went back to her and I said 'Ms, when you told me to shut up and get out, it made me feel like I was nothing', and they had this dialogue, her and the teacher. Absolutely fine now. I said 'cos you've shown a level of maturity, and your teacher has obviously matched you in that', so you can sometimes see the language change, and see that they're social skills change. And when they change, invariably, the teachers will change as well.*

### *Building confidence*

M: *Yeah, I've got a lot of students with low confidence.*

M: *Yeah, I've got lots of low confidence in the girls I work with.*

M: *It's about building up their self-esteem.*

M: *They're very very shy. So shy that there's no eye contact. Nothing!*

M: *So it's just getting them to a point where they can say something good about themselves, um, even look up. Little things. This is all impacting their education because they just can't open up, or really have a lot of friends. Things like that.*

M: *Yeah, it's basically life skills, social skills.*

- T: *It's all about confidence I think. Students who don't attend don't attain, so that's the start. Then it's about that confidence which allows them to start to speak up in class, not to sit right at the back but take part. That's what improves their attainment.*
- M: *It's about confidence in the classroom too, cos some of my students, they lack confidence in the classroom, so they won't put their hand up or do a presentation. In one particular case, she had a media presentation, and she was absolutely dreading it, so she would go off and hide in the toilets, or not go in. I spent about 3 sessions working on that, getting her ready for that, and she finally did it, and she came back beaming, feels a lot of pressure's gone now, and she feels she can actually focus on just doing her work now rather than having that media presentation in her head all the time.*
- M: *I had one student who was really nervous. Even in a conversation like this, he kind of whispers, but he said one of the things he wants to do is to be able to speak louder in front of his class, cos even when he's sitting at the front, you can't hear him. So what I got him to do was to stand on the other side of the room and said, 'OK, read this out to me', and just done a quick session on how he could project his voice, and he done really really well. I could hear him really clearly from the other side of the room and he was just smiling, he was beaming, he was like 'ah yeah!' I said, 'Look, I'm at the other end of the room and I can hear you. Now imagine I'm not in the room. Imagine I'm standing outside the glass, and you have to talk to me outside the glass, and I have to hear you'. And he spoke up even louder. So even just with a simple thing like that, he really responded really well to. And I remember one of his targets was to have confidence in a lesson to speak up loudly, so that's what I'm going to review with him on Friday.*
- M: *The other week our students had some externals coming in to do one-to-one interviews. And some of my students had low motivation, and low confidence, but they scored like 21 /25, 20/25; all high marks. Some said that they would have hired them on the spot if they could.*
- T: *A lot of students I find that don't have that self-confidence tend to shy away, sit at the back of the classroom, don't speak, and try to go under the radar. They're the ones that are good for the mentoring sessions basically. Brings them out of themselves, got someone to speak to about personal problems, but not just personal problems, school life.*
- A: *And when you look at the students that have been mentored, what do you see? (asked separately to both senior teachers)*
- T1: *Umm, I would say, once again, it's that self-confidence thing, and they seem more self-assured. More to know exactly what they want to do and where they want to go.*
- T2: *Right, well one of the most important things for me was self-confidence. Um, students believe in themselves and for their esteem to grow, and I've noticed that with nearly all of them*
- M: *I had this other student, and I said 'how do you want other people to view you, like the good things you want people to say about you?'. And she was like 'oh, I never think good about myself, so why would other people'. But I was like 'but you do want other people to think good of you, don't you. No one wants people to say bad things about them', and she was like 'ah, this is good, cos I always think bad about myself. This is actually really good - I'm excited to think positive about myself'. So even things like that, self-esteem is really an impact there.*

*You can see it, and it feeds into their lessons as well, how they conduct themselves around the school.*

### *Social skills / making friends*

*S: Yeah, half the group I didn't really like. I didn't really like half the people in my school to be honest. I was really closed up. I wasn't anti-social, but I was just closed up towards people.*

*A: And mentoring helped you to think they might be alright people?*

*S: Yeah, I was just quite sad before mentoring, but now I'm more confident.*

*A: Do people that are mentored become a bit of a group?*

*S: A squad. (laughter)*

*A: Have you made friends through it at all?*

*S: First of all, I'm being honest, when we first got into our groups, I thought 'it's gonna be really awkward for me, getting on with different people'. As the months have gone on, progressing on, it didn't really turn out that awkward like I was expecting. At first I couldn't get on with no one. But as the months have gone on, I can, which is good in my opinion. And, with that, with M's help as well, from communicating with more people, to carry on making more friends around.*

### *Social and Family Issues*

*TL: One of my mentors has a student - she's 15 and involved with in like a sex gang...being groomed by older guys so the police were involved with that one...another mentor has got someone who severely self-harms. She watches videos on YouTube and cuts herself and things like that... we've had abortions... 3 abortions for a 15 year old girl. Everything. Completely across the board. Drugs, kicked out of school for smoking weed... like everything. Yeah the majority are issues like they don't know who their dad is or like the girl and the mum are not talking and just causing friction at home... a lot of it.*

*M: A girl I'm mentoring, her mum's really pleased with her seeing me because the relationship with the dad has got much better. Before she didn't have any kind of dialogue with her dad. She would just come in and be with the mum, but there was no actual issue, she just didn't talk to him. So I just encouraged her, when she started talking to me about her family, I just encouraged her to just 'talk to your dad, spend time with him, just go in the room and chill.' She actually done it, and she came back so happy, like 'Oh my God, Miss, I'm so close with my dad now, and he's funny.'*

*S: I used to go to work frequently for my father in his restaurant and it used to be too frequent, like every day, and I would come home from school every day and go to work, so I had no time for revision, so that was slowly killing me. I spoke to M about it, and he said confront your dad and tell him you want your GCSEs, because my dad wants me to go to university. I told him 'I'm in year 11, and you're taking me out of my core subjects all the time, and I could be staying back for revision, doing loads of coursework which I could of caught up on, but I went to work', and he just said 'yeah, why not, I'll get a new worker', and he's got two new workers.*

- S: Not to get too personal, but it's really helpful with my home life especially. Because me and my dad haven't had the best of relationships, because recently he came back to live with us, and this mentoring programme sort of helped me to deal with it. I wouldn't say I'm an aggressive person, but before, I used to be very easily agitated, and violent when unnecessary. This mentoring programme helped me to channel that in the right way.*
- A: How did it do that?*
- S: Well normally if I'm the type of person where if someone says something to me and I don't like it, I react with my fists or whatever. But with this programme, sort of I understand, well I knew before, but now I know that there's better solutions; there's a right way to things, and that's not it.*
- A: So how did it help with your dad?*
- S: Just like I've been able to connect with him more, talk to him more. Cos normally, the only ever conversation we would have was about football, and I don't really like football that much, and I was scared to tell him, but the sessions have helped me sort of like, 'dad, I don't like football to be honest'.*
- A: That's good. How did he take it?*
- S: He took it alright actually. We've learnt to bond over other things. Turns out we both have a nice interest over suits. Yeah. I love suits so does he. And other things. Music and that. Just talk about things that father and sons should talk about. Before this whole mentoring, and me getting to speak to him properly, didn't speak to him for about a year. So yeah, and this has sort of helped.*
- S: My parents split up as well, and you keep on thinking about it, like, you don't concentrate on your work.*
- A: Is that something you can talk to M about?*
- S: Yeah, yeah. I talk to him freely about it, but I'm alright with it now, but at the start I was a bit like, me and my brother were a bit like, upset about it. It's made a big difference, cos when you've got someone to talk to, you feel like really comfortable, I dunno, you feel that if something goes wrong, you can always talk to him.*
- S: I used to never hang round with my mum, but M, he set me a task, you know, to know what she does. Thanks for that, every day after school, I was jumping on her bed asking her how she was doing. Yeah, now we're both smiling, and she gives me cakes. Especially the cakes.*
- M: One school we were doing a monthly parent club... so the parents used to come in... all the ones I mentored and we used to all sit down and chat and talk about how their students are doing and how the parents are coping with home life. Some of them were crying saying they can't deal with the student etc. ... and other parents would get involved and say maybe try this technique. It was a good little like peer mentor thing we could do with the parent. It's really good - I've been in one of my schools now where the parents have come in for a meeting because their student is about to be kicked out of school, but they felt my input was valuable because I had a great relationship with the student. I do really think the parents need to be on board more with the programme.*

## Academic Impact

### Attendance

S: *I would always wake up late, then couldn't get to school on time. Just slow at getting ready.*

A: *Does that get your day off to a bad start?*

S: *If I'm late into a lesson and they've explained what they've got to do, I never know what I'm doing*

S: *He's telling me I have to attend these classes, cos some of them I didn't attend. Um, but then I went to him and he said 'attend them S, you need them', and then I started attending them, and I started doing well. It feels good because if it wasn't for him I wouldn't have gone to some of them. I would have gone to school but wouldn't have gone to the revision classes.*

### Target Setting and motivation

S1: *Yeah, it's helped me a lot. They give you targets to set. Yeah, and the targets help you out. Like if he says get less B1s, or be good in lessons, like you just do it. B1s are behaviour points.*

A: *Before, were you getting quite a lot of B1s?*

S1: *Yeah. Last year I was on 120. This year I'm on 63. I'm doing so much better this year.*

A: *And when your behaviour improves, how does that affect your attainment? Like how you're doing in your lessons?*

S2: *It affects it a lot. When you're out of trouble, you stick to work and that. S1: you concentrate*

A: *Anybody else got targets?*

S3: *Talking. Stop talking.*

A: *How are you doing?*

S3: *It's alright*

A: *What makes a difference?*

S3: *Just get on, like, ignore anyone who tries talking to you.*

A: *How about you?*

S4: *Improve my attitude and stop being suspended.*

A: *How's that been? Have you been suspended less?*

S4: *I haven't been suspended since he set it.*

S1: *You want to do M proud. You want to get to him and say yeah, I did it.*

S2: *Um, like he made me concentrate more in classes, and he's made me wanna work more. Like before, I wasn't really bothered, I was just chilled back, and didn't really bother,*

A: *Why do you want to work now?*

S2: *I don't know - he made me think about and I actually want to make my mum proud now.*

S3: *I think it was just seeing a friendly face that we could trust, that wanted us, that made us want to make our parents proud.*

S1: *I used to be bad but now I'm good. I don't have any detentions no more.*

A: *Did you used to have loads?*

S1: *Twice a week, or get a telling off, but I don't have that much anymore.*

A: *What happened?*

S1: *I went to him and he was like 'S, you need to behave yourself, you've got your GCSEs, you need to be mature'. So I said 'yeah, I'll change', and from that moment on I changed.*

A: *People must have said that to you before.*

S1: *Yeah, but I didn't really pick it up, cos like it was like hard to talk to them, sort of, but with M, it was easy to talk to him.*

S2: *I used to come late sometimes, didn't wanna go, but now I come.*

A: *Why's that changed?*

S2: *Cos of M telling me I have to go.*

S3: *On Fridays, if you've got all bad lessons, and then you've got M, and you go to him, he motivates you for the lessons, he's like 'come on, you can do this, you can do that.'*

## Impact on the school

### Information sharing

T1: *Fortunately for me, I have a very very good rapport with my students as it is. I'll be honest with you, it's very rare they don't open up to me. But on this mentoring session, there's been a few things they've opened up to M about that I didn't know nothing about. And it surprised me, but yeah, it made me think 'Excellent! That's exactly what I wanted. And now I know about this new problem, what can we do about it? What can we do to rectify it, help this student further?' And that's exactly what happened, so yeah.*

T2: *Another thing we do which is pretty good is, once a half term, we have our inclusion meeting. We have all the leadership team, the heads of college and the external agencies come in to discuss anyone who's receiving an intervention. M has not been able to attend because on the day he's obviously got other schools, but he always sends us a written report which we go through and discuss, which is really good, so everyone's aware of the intervention that he's doing, and what he's doing. Particularly this year, it's made a significant difference, and really has impacted on them, but also our relationship with the mentor, and the information both ways. Cos some of the information he's provided with, we wouldn't have had without that.*

D: *Yeah. Again, it links back to the value of team. The illustration I use is, when I was a kid, I knew to ask my dad for an ice cream. But he knew I knew that, that he would tend to say yes, but he'd say 'what does your mum say?' So it's recognising that there's a difference between*

*mum and dad, and its recognising that they're working together. We're different to the school but we're very committed to working in partnership. And the illustration I use when I'm talking to schools is, when the head of year comes round and talks to us in the morning, and they say 'ah, yes, you're seeing Johnny, ask him what happened yesterday', that gives us just enough information to guide us but not to make us biased. Then we get it from his perspective, not just the schools perspective, and we can feed back to the school and we can say 'I had a chat with Johnny, he says this is what happened.' We want to support the school, we want to support the schools policies, but if we end up being seen as just a part of the school, then we're no different, and we're not independent from the school, and we won't get the conversations that the school can't get.*

*M: Sometimes the students may exaggerate about what's going on at home. Like one of my students was going on about like how his dad was a big drug murderer kind of guy, and yesterday we had a meeting with the dad at school, and he was fine basically. Because this student lived with his mum before, and his mum passed away, but his mum had no boundaries for him, and he was doing what he wanted, and now he's got a bit of structure in his life, he's like 'nah, I want to go into care'. He's being blowing it out of proportion all this time, and when we met him, we found that all this time, his dad just wants the best for him.*

#### *Mentor as mediator*

*T1: Because certain students don't on with certain teachers, they might have issues. So they can bring that up with M who will in turn bring that up with me, and I can liaise with the students or the teachers to get things sorted.*

*T2: I think we know exactly what we need to know, and if he has any concerns, which he has done on a couple of occasions, he comes straight to us. And it's been essential that he's done that, because we've then acted on that, and he's been involved in quite a lot of the follow up as well, if he's been available. Fortunately he's been available to come and deal with the situation, with the assistant head it was actually. They sat there and worked with the boy together. I've got nothing but praise for him this year, same with the assistant head and the admin inclusion manager who does all the organisation side of things. Can't sing his praises high enough.*

#### *Less classroom disruption*

*T: But I've seen, particularly with one of my students who was very troublesome behaviour wise, I've seen a fantastic improvement in him. One of the good things with that is he used to often to say to me 'Sir have I got M this week? Sir when's M coming in? Sir have I got M soon? Ah, I can't believe this things finishing with M, when am I gonna have him next?' which just proved to me that he's built up a really good rapport with the mentor. I have definitely noticed a significant improvement since he's been doing the mentoring process with M. Definitely.*

*S: Yeah, yeah. Cos we had parents evening and my form tutor spoke to my mum, and my form tutor said to my mum 'S hasn't got in trouble for one month, he hasn't got any B1s' – I got quite happy.*

*S: I just don't know what it is – you just think of doing something bad, but in your head you just think Nah, don't do it.*

- S: *Yeah sometimes you have to (misbehave), just to fit in and that. If you go around the whole year without a single B1 or something, or really low B1s, they'll say 'ah, you're such a goon' at school and that. But then I dunno, if you want to do well, you've got to be that goon and just er, yeah...*
- S: *Some teachers I disagreed with, then M told me just to keep it in my head, and that got me in less trouble as well.*
- S: *I liked it because they made me improve my behaviour in school and my homework and my attitude in food tech.*

#### *Time saving / economic case*

- T: *If the school has funds to be able to put towards LifeLine mentoring, I'd recommend it. With my school, our budget is limited. So I've been very very happy, or lucky, that we've had the opportunity to have them in our school for a year and a half, you know, at no real cost, but I would recommend to any school, you know, to bring in mentoring.*
- A: *In terms of behaviour, would you say the difference in behaviour has reduced your workload in terms of the number of times you get called to a student? (asked separately to both senior teachers.)*
- T1: *Definitely. As I said, in regards to one student in particular, issues were coming up every other day at the very least with this young man in regards to his general behaviour around the school, not only in classrooms. Um, I would say a good few weeks into doing the mentoring sessions, that decreased significantly. So now I'm at a point where there may an issue once every couple of weeks. At the worse, there's a little thing once a week, which I can speak to him about it and we get past that. Whereas before it was every other day, or every day, so yeah. For some of them it's an ongoing thing. It's not as though now they've got no behaviour issues, but before where there were incidences all the time, now it might be one every few weeks.*
- T2: *Yeah, I mean, with this one particular student, once or twice a week I would be called to deal with an issue, and by the time I'd spoken to the teacher, spoken to the student, made phone calls, written a report, updated the system, that could take two hours, almost every day. Now I maybe get called once every couple of weeks, and it's not for big things, it's for small things. We're just keeping on top of his behaviour, so it doesn't take me long to sort it out. It's maybe saved me 5 or 10 hours a week.*

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