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Evaluating a Formalised Peer Mentoring Programme: student voice or impact audit.


This paper reports the DCSF funded evaluation (September 2006-March 2008) of a formalised peer mentoring programme piloted in 180 schools. The programme was managed by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) and the approach to the evaluation involved analysis of school application forms, questionnaires at the outset (T1) and at the end of the year (T2), interviews at T1 and T2, eight school case studies, a before/after mentor/mentee instrument and an impact audit. This paper will address the methodological approach to the evaluation, discuss the findings and consider the implications for the development of peer mentoring programmes in schools.

Defining “formalised peer mentoring” within the framework intended by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) was key to establishing an effective agenda for evaluating the programme. The MBF define mentoring as:

“a one-to-one non-judgemental relationship in which an individual, the mentor, voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. The relationship is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentees’s life, and lasts for a significant and sustained period of time.”

(MBF, 2006:16)

Findings suggested that degreeed 'formalisation' provides the basis for what constitute ‘models’. Formalisation has clear benefits and constituted prior arrangements about where to meet, when, for how long, with what agenda. Much positive anecdotal/qualitative evidence presented, which is strongly represented in the “voice” of the mentees and mentors (see Table 1). Schools were much less able to provide quantitative
evidence of impact on mentors or mentees in terms of attendance, attainment and behaviour.

Table 1: Peer mentoring experience in case study schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mentor (%)</th>
<th>Mentee (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewed as a positive experience</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped them/changed them</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction
Over the past ten years, mentoring of children and young people has become an increasingly important feature of social policy in the UK (DfES, 2005a, 2005b). This has been mirrored in the rapid growth in the number of mentoring schemes operating. However, much of the existing research on mentoring of young people is from America and has focused upon the ‘classic model’ of mentoring, that of a one to one relationship between an adult and a young person (Phillip and Hendry, 1996). A robust metaanalysis by Dubois et al (2002) of 55 evaluations of mentoring schemes in America found that these programmes had a significant and measurable effect on young people, especially those considered to be at high risk, but that the size of the effect was quite modest.

Further evaluations have similarly identified positive outcomes. Newburn and Shiner (2006) conducted an evaluation of a UK mentoring programme, Mentoring Plus, designed to work with disaffected young people. Mentoring Plus aimed to reduce youth crime and other at risk behaviour and help young people back into education, training and employment. Positive effects were identified in relation to young people’s engagement in education, training and work; however, there was no clear evidence that the programme had any impact on offending, family relationships, substance use or self-esteem.

The range of research, focusing specifically upon peer mentoring is far more limited than for the classic model. A study by Sheehan et al (1999) of an 18-month community based US peer mentoring programme on violence prevention found that, compared with a matched control group, children who had attended lessons on
violence prevention given by their peers avoided an increase in attitudes that supported violence, showed a decrease in their violence-related attitudes and increased self-esteem. Another American study (Pringle et al, 1993) found that peer tutoring and mentoring fostered strong bonds between mentors and mentees, helped new students and those with limited proficiency in English to integrate more successfully into the school environment and encouraged academic achievement.

In England, Nelson (2003) conducted a qualitative study of a secondary school based peer mentoring scheme that aimed to ease the transition of pupils from feeder primary schools to the secondary school and to have a positive impact upon pupils’ key skills and learning. Year 10 students were matched with Year 7 pupils using a number of criteria: same gender; had attended the same feeder school; lived in the same vicinity; had common hobbies and interests. Pupils were matched to encourage the formation of friendships and thus positive outcomes for both mentor and mentee. Nelson concluded that the mentoring scheme had improved the literacy and communication skills of mentors and mentees, had made mentees less anxious about the transition from primary to secondary school and had improved pupils’ self-esteem and confidence.

In relation to the present evaluation, the overarching aim was to support the development of evidence-based peer mentoring and enhance the capacity of those involved at all levels to engage in evaluating practice. Specific objectives were:

1. to develop a typology of models which clarify structure, target and purpose;
2. to identify the factors associated with good and less good experience of Formalised Peer Mentoring (models, organisation, implementation, maintenance);
3. to use a multi-method approach to gauge the impact on young people and schools. This involved a standardised instrument and other techniques, use of school data during the year, staff and other stakeholder perceptions;
4. to contribute to guidance on ‘what works’ for particular mentoring aims or mentee groups.
The evaluation was structured into three strands, intended to occur over three time periods:

**Autumn term 2006** - during the early commencement of the scheme, October-December 2006. This is ‘Time 1’ or T1;

**Summer term 2007** - to enable process data and early outcome data to be collected; This is ‘Time 2’ or T2;

**Autumn term 2007** - devoted to acquiring impact data and reporting the evaluation approaches and instruments for future use.

The strands were as follows:

- Strand A – Analysis of mentoring models in the original participating schools
- Strand B – Management, implementation and process study
- Strand C – Impact assessment of peer mentoring on the pupil and school

In the final synthesis, the following data are analysed:

**Table 2: Data Analysed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School application forms</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator questionnaires</td>
<td>T1 – 89; T2 - 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor questionnaires</td>
<td>20 schools; completed T1 &amp; T2 - 168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee questionnaires</td>
<td>20 schools; completed T1 &amp; T2 - 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School case studies</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator interviews</td>
<td>8 at T1 and T2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor interviews</td>
<td>T1 33; T2 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee interviews</td>
<td>T1 31; T2 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support agent interviews</td>
<td>T1 7 schools; T2 8 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Audit</td>
<td>11 schools; mentors 136; mentees 164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Projected individual outcomes**

Schools were asked in their application to select one or more individual outcomes to guide their peer mentoring project throughout the process. The majority of schools selected a number of outcomes, the proportion of which is shown in table 3.
Table 3: Individual outcomes of PM projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual outcome</th>
<th>% of schools selecting outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved ability to cope with school life</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider friendship group</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved motivation</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved relationships</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved confidence</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of sources of help</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved participation in school activities</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved behaviour</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Projected longer-term outcomes

In addition, schools were asked to select one primary and one secondary longer term outcome which they anticipated for their peer mentoring project. Table 4 shows the specific primary and secondary longer term outcomes selected both by number of schools (in brackets) and percentage of schools. (NB: 2 schools failed to indicate their primary longer-term outcome and 37 schools failed to indicate their secondary longer-term outcome). As the table clearly indicates, the majority of schools selected improved academic performance/attainment (56%) as the primary outcome, with the highest proportion of schools selecting improved attendance as the secondary longer-term outcome (38%).

Table 4: Longer-term outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Longer-term outcome</th>
<th>Number and % of schools selecting longer-term outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved academic performance/attainment</td>
<td>99 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer exclusions</td>
<td>11 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved attendance</td>
<td>15 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in bullying</td>
<td>53 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology

**Strand A: Analysis of mentoring ‘models’**

In developing the four strands for the analysis of data, the MBF notion of models was used- Transition, Bullying, Attainment, Behaviour.

**Strand B: Management, implementation and process study**

Strand B consisted of two parts:

1. *Self-completed survey by school staff on process issues*

   Questionnaires were sent, during the start-up period, to a key respondent in each of the schools; this was the lead name given in the school application forms and referred to in this report as ‘school coordinators’.

   The T1 early process questionnaire provided data on the ambitions for the scheme and contributed to an understanding of the ‘model’ as well as allowing a description of the management of the scheme and the selection and matching of mentors and mentees. The T2 later process questionnaire survey followed in the Summer term 2007 and asked respondents to look back and report on achievements and the factors which aided and hindered peer mentoring.

2. *Case studies*

   Eight case-study schools were selected from the range of ‘models’ being implemented as discernible from the analysis of the peer mentoring applications.

   The plan was to interview five mentors and five mentees in each school. Members of the research team interviewed 31 mentees and 33 mentors at T1 and 30 mentors and 30 mentees at T2 (mentors: 83% white British/other white background; mentees: 93% white British/other white background).

   Within the interviews, process issues were addressed including feelings (positive or negative) about being a mentor or mentee, the extent of their preparation for the role and what they hoped to gain from involvement in the scheme for themselves and more generally. The interviews lasted between 25-45 minutes.
To gain further information on the implementation of peer mentoring, interviews were conducted with lead coordinating staff and their allocated support agency in each of the eight case study schools; at T1 and T2. These interviews lasted thirty minutes to one hour.

**Strand C: Impact assessment of peer mentoring on the pupil and school**

The methods used in Strand C were of two kinds. The first was an impact survey using a questionnaire, adapted from the *About Me* Questionnaire (Maras, 2002) completed by mentors and mentees.

The second method was an *Impact Audit*, devised by the team, to be completed by the school PM lead in relation to mentee performance in the current year and the previous year. Though the mentoring schemes differ in terms of target group and specific aims, a generic impact data capture approach was nonetheless judged to have considerable merit. The aim was to match the questionnaire respondents at T1 and T2 and also compare subgroups.

Of the 180 PM school schemes and 3,600 matched pairs of mentors/mentees, a sample was drawn to achieve 600 responses at T1 and an anticipated 480 at T2. Forty schools were sampled to represent a cross-section of the different variants of PM schemes and take all matched pairs of mentors/mentees within each. The sample was large enough to give reasonable statistical power for comparison before and after for both boys and girls.

**Impact survey**

Impact measures comprising before and after data on attainment, attendance, behaviour and ‘other’ were gathered partly to determine the feasibility of such measures, for the individual school and for the aggregate of schools.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Coordinator perspective**

The most frequently selected aims by all schools were reduced bullying (61%), increased academic attainment (62%) and supporting student transitions (67%). In addition, the scheme co-ordinators within the case study schools placed strong emphasis on improving the confidence and self-esteem of students involved with the project.
Improved school reputation, as an additional benefit of the peer mentoring project, tended to be a common theme amongst scheme- co-ordinators. In another case study school, with the overarching aim of reduced bullying, the project also aimed to forge bonds between older and younger pupils, not only to address bullying but to help the transition of Year 7 pupils into the school. The scheme coordinator stated:

“... peer mentors will provide that individual relationship for each student. I really want every student in [...] to have somebody they can relate to basically... A lot of pupils come from very small primary schools to this very big urban secondary and they can feel lost.”

**Mentor perspective**

In 6/8 case study schools, mentors had a good understanding of their school’s aims within the broad framework of the specific project. Most mentors, when asked the aims of their school’s peer mentoring project, tended to focus on generic strategies to achieve the expected outcomes, rather than focussing specifically on the objectives stated by the school. For example in one school, employing a peer mentoring model aimed at the successful transition of students from Year 6 to Year 7, typical aims stated by Year 9 mentors at T1 included:

“reduce loneliness of younger pupils”

“introduce Year 7 to a nicer way of education, so they enjoy school, stop bullying...make it easier for them, make them happier in school.”

In relation to personal expectations, mentors often had altruistic aims for being part of the scheme, including the wish to see their mentee develop and achieve:

“I hope to be able to see this person become better at understanding what they are trying to achieve.”

Personal aims for the mentor also included to help them gain entrance to university or job of their choice, to develop their own communication and understanding skills and to provide them with a more rounded school experience.
“In most jobs you need good communication and if you show you have become a peer mentor it shows you actually have good communication skills”
“It will give me a purpose at school rather than just learning.”

*Mentee perspective*

The extent to which mentees understood the main aims of their school’s peer mentoring project, as defined by the scheme co-ordinators, varied across the case study schools. The majority at T1 were unable to name the ‘model’ or state the precise aim of the project. However, they had a good understanding in terms of either one or more of the individual or longer term outcomes. What was thought to be the school’s aim often related to what the mentee personally hoped to gain from the experience; for example, an improvement in their grades and ability to learn and to become more confident.

In the majority of case study schools, the mentees’ understanding of the aims of the project tended to reflect a generic rather than precise grasp.

“To care for other people, make sure they are happy”
“Help with learning and make new friends”.

In relation to personal aims, the majority of mentees at all case study schools had clear aims at T1, which were largely borne out at T2. In one of the case study schools which employed the attainment model, the following personal aims were typical at T1:

“want to be much more extrovert and confident”
“stop bullying, help with work and work through problems”
“…helping with homework, talking through issues.”

At T2 when asked to consider how peer mentoring had helped them, the same mentees respectively made the following comments:

“….at the start I was shy, not anymore…”
“(It) helped me to get to class on time, with my behaviour and to apply myself to my work.”
“I like coming to school now…. talking with my mentor made me feel better about myself.”
Training of co-ordinators

At both T1 and T2, the majority of co-ordinators found the training given by MBF to be useful to them in their role as peer mentoring co-ordinator (T1:94%; T2:87%). Within the case study schools, scheme coordinators agreed that the MBF training had been useful for enabling them to meet others, network and share experiences.

“The preparation in terms of the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation Training, their resource, their sort of ongoing support has been excellent and that should really be applauded”.

In addition however to the training provided by MBF, a number of scheme co-ordinators accessed other related training, e.g mentoring specific training, counselling, monitoring and evaluation etc.

Training of mentors and mentees

The training and induction of mentors was rated as ‘mostly’ or ‘highly’ successful by 93% of co-ordinators. This was supported by the mentors across the case study schools, who generally felt that their training had been good. Some co-ordinators felt that the training and induction of mentees had been less successful with 71% regarding it as ‘mostly’ or ‘highly’ successful, 25% saying there had been ‘some successes’.

Recruitment of mentors and mentees

In almost all cases, for whatever the focus of the PM programme was, mentees were referred by form tutors, year heads or Learning Mentors. Pupils were consulted as to their views and could withdraw and parents were also informed and their agreement requested. Mentors were almost always simply volunteers though there was evidence of encouragement and ‘selling’ the idea in a number of the case study schools.

Matching

Matching of mentor-mentee pairs varied between schools. At T1, the most frequently employed criteria for matching, cited by scheme co-ordinators, were:

- the personality characteristics of the pupils involved (86%)
- the sex of pupils (78%)
• hobbies of pupils (71%)
• other criteria included tutor requests and the academic subjects studied by the pupils.

Eighty per cent of mentors, across the case study schools believed that the criteria used to match them with their mentees were right. There was general satisfaction across this group. Generally, across the case study schools, mentor satisfaction was also influenced by other related school processes - e.g the extent to which meetings were formalised and the degree of scheme coordinator intervention at the outset and ongoing support.

Ninety three per cent of mentees, at the case study schools, were of the opinion that the school had employed the right criteria to match them with their mentor. 80% of the mentee-mentor matched pairs were male to male or female to female.

Amongst the 20% who were less satisfied with the matching, the following reasons were cited:

“(male mentee) I would have preferred a boy - it’s easier to talk to him”.
“We haven’t seen much of each other. We are supposed to meet once a week and we haven’t.”

**Control of mentoring sessions: frequency, duration, time, location**

Evidence from the case study schools suggested that the degree of control exerted by co-ordinators over the peer mentoring schemes varied considerably from school to school. However, in the case study schools where peer mentoring projects were particularly successful, the supporting systems were relatively strong. The majority of scheme co-ordinators had provided their mentors with suggestions for activities and resources that they could use, for example worksheets and games, but had encouraged mentors to take the lead and to be responsive to the individual needs and preferences of their mentees.

In the majority of case study schools, mentoring sessions occurred once a week. This was on a formal basis, on a specific day in the week. Across schools, the most common meeting times were ‘during break times’ and ‘other times’ rather than before or after school. The most frequently cited ‘other times’ mentioned by co-ordinators were ‘during
form/tutor time’ (60%) and ‘during lessons’ (35%) with ‘outside school’, ‘during assembly’ and ‘ad-hoc’ also being mentioned (1% for each).

Management and Monitoring
Analysis shows that, although co-ordinators were on the whole quite positive about their management of the schemes, there was still scope for improvement. Issues relating to management were most frequently cited in response to questions about any problems or difficulties co-ordinators had experienced in running the peer mentoring schemes. At T2, 24% of co-ordinators had experienced a ‘major problem’ in managing their time with 34% having ‘significant problems’ and 36% ‘small problems’. Only 6% of co-ordinators said that they had had ‘no problems’ in managing their time. Workload pressures were cited by a relatively high proportion of co-ordinators (35%) as being the biggest barrier to the peer mentoring project. The following comment highlights the problem:

“If this was to be really embedded in the school, there would have to be someone whose job was to be head of peer mentoring and not added onto something else. That won’t happen without funding or if we are really, really successful next year then maybe.”

Schools used several different measures to monitor outcomes for pupils. Case study schools reported using a variety of different methods to monitor and measure ‘softer’ outcomes for pupils involved in peer mentoring. The following comments reflect the co-ordinator’s approach to monitoring:

“Confidence and self esteem, it is very difficult to measure these things, we can however use information on our behavioural team incidents forms etc and compare them with previous year groups. That’s one of the main ways we are going to try to do it because otherwise it’s sort of general observations rather than measurable statistics... We do keep feedback every time we see our mentors and mentees, in a very general way and talk about how the scheme is going.”

Impact of participating in peer mentoring: mentees
87% of mentees across the case study schools enjoyed the peer mentoring experience. The reasons they gave varied. In some case study schools, reasons given by mentees for why they had enjoyed the programme tended to be focussed on the self. This is reflected in the following comments which were typical across these schools irrespective of the model:
“Yes - talking to someone.”
“Meeting every week.”
“Getting targets - improve behaviour.”
“Yes – having someone to talk to.”
“Just seeing her and help with homework.”

Across all case study schools, 90% of mentees were of the opinion that being mentored had helped them. 64% of the mentees had been helped by the process in ways that corresponded to what they had hoped for at T1. The following mentee comments at T1 and T2 reflect this positive aspect of the peer mentoring process:

T1: better attitude, less problems.
T2: attitude towards school, school work and in general I am better. It has given me help with class work and skills.
T1: to start being better behaved.
T2: better behaviour and better attitude in class.
T1: better reading and writing.
T2: academically and more confident.
T1: more confident.
T2: more confident.

Mentor views
Relationship with Mentee

The majority of mentors agreed that the relationship with their mentee was good or had improved (94%). They believed this was due to spending time with them and building trust. Although a number commented on the more friendly relationship which developed over time, they clearly did not perceive the mentee-mentor relationship as a friendship in the normal sense. Although, the following comment summarises a view held by mentors; this was influenced by the degree of formalisation within the school:

“Right from the start there was a line I did not cross, I was not there to be his friend in the same way that his year group friends are. I was there to advise and help him and I need to have an element of authority and control that a regular friend would not have. When the scheme co-ordinators are not around the mentors have to assume responsibility so there needs to be an element of control in the mentor/mentee relationship. We still have a laugh together but there is that element of respect which is important.”

Relationship with scheme co-ordinator, teachers, other mentors

Evidence from the case study schools suggested that the perception amongst mentors was that they had been supported by their scheme co-ordinators. However, the degree of
support or involvement varied across schools. In all cases however, mentors felt that mentor support groups had been invaluable. They enjoyed the comradeship with each other and found the support system very effective.

**Impact of participating in peer mentoring: mentors**

All mentors across the case study schools were glad they became mentors. The majority (55%) equated this with being able to help others. 10% were glad they had been mentors as it enabled them to make new friends. Other reasons included helped them to talk to others more easily (6%), made them more confident (6%), made them feel good about themselves (6%), liked being given responsibility (6%), they had a positive impact on the school (6%) and 12% viewed it within the framework of helping them with their own career/CV/university application. 97% said they would be mentors again. The majority believed that it had been an enjoyable experience. Other reasons given for why they would be mentors again included:

“*It’s been a really good experience getting to know others and dealing with life’s problems.*”

“I’ve done it and now know what to expect and it has given me a broader outlook.”

“Yes-I like to share/hear people’s problems and help them out.”

“Yes- if you’ve first experienced it you know what to do better next time”

“Yes-it’s fun.”

“(girl: boy; mentor: mentee) Yes I think it’s so nice to know you can help someone, but it can also be stressful .A big issue would come up and that would make it stressful.”

**Enabling factors**

At T2, a number of factors were cited by scheme coordinators as factors which had contributed to the successful implementation and development of the peer mentoring project. These are clearly shown in table 5.
Table 5: Enabling factors for the success of peer mentoring schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>% of co-ordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor enthusiasm/commitment/reliability</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff support</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong lead/involvement of co-ordinator</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee engagement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High profile of scheme and mentors in the school</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good training</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust procedures for selecting mentors/mentees</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting and valuing mentors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a designated room/time for mentoring sessions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards/incentives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support agency</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils seeing benefits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand for mentoring in the school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a vertical tutor group system</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 112 \)

**Difficulties and Weaknesses**

Time management was the greatest difficulty causing factor for scheme coordinators. The percentage of co-ordinators reporting at T2 that they had experienced ‘major problems’ with time management was greater than had been anticipated by co-ordinators at T1 (T1: 18%, T2: 24%).

At T2, scheme coordinators cited a number of factors which they considered to be barriers to the successful development of the peer mentoring project in their school.

- Lack of space for sessions
- Poor communication between staff, mentors and mentees
- Mismatched pairings
- Mentors/mentees not fully committed
- Finding time for meetings
- Lack of staff support
- Low status/profile of scheme in the school
- Students forgetting to meet
- Lack of parental support
- Collating evidence/documentation
- Identifying resources for students to use
- Lack of support by support agency
Factors influencing pupils’ completion of peer mentoring schemes

At T2, scheme coordinators cited a number of factors which had influenced the students’ completion of the peer mentoring project. The most frequently cited was the enthusiasm of mentors and mentees and their willingness to commit to the mentoring scheme (56%); this was considered to be more influential than practical factors such as availability of space, staff support or how well mentors and mentees were matched. Another important factor, considered relevant by scheme coordinators, was students’ other commitments and time pressures (30%). This is reflected in the following typical comment made by a scheme coordinator:

“…time for the mentors because they’re under such pressure from subject teachers and senior management to achieve…they tend to be the brighter students and there tends to be more demands on their time…so that’s the main pressure I think”.

Impact

The findings from mentor and mentee T1 and T2 questionnaires largely supported other data. The responses to all eight items were very positive as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Impact - Mentee Views at T1 and T2
Figure 2: Impact - Mentor Views at T1 and T2

Figure 2 shows mentor expectations were also high and were matched by the outcomes at T2. For five of the eight items, mentor views at T2 were higher than their expectations at T1 and, for all at T2, the responses were well over 80% positive.

The About Me section of the questionnaire examined, not the pupils’ perceptions of and attitudes towards mentoring but, their attitudes towards peers, family, self, and elements of school (four items). For mentees, the mean scores show a decrease, although slight, in the strength of positive responses at T2 in comparison to T1; with the exception of peer identity, the mean scores were lower at T2 than T1 (table 6). This is to be expected over a relatively short period of time and with younger adolescents. Maras’s work shows the average declining identification with things academic up to Year 10 with an improvement in Year 11. That the mean score for peer identity rose slightly from 3.81 at T1 to 3.87 at T2, suggests that there is some improvement in the way mentees perceive themselves in relation to and in their interactions with their peers. With no comparison group, with combined age groups and with no national norms that could be applied here, it is not possible to do more than speculate that the decline is not as great as it might have been. There was no significant difference for girls compared with boys.
Table 6: Mentee mean scores on subscales at T1 and T2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About me - mentees</th>
<th>Mean T1</th>
<th>Mean T2</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer identity</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>+0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family identity</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School identity</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic effort</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic competence</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic importance</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General self worth</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 143

Table 7 shows a different pattern for mentors. For mentors, the negative changes were smaller and fewer, with the exception of school identity, where the fall was statistically significant and as great for boys as for girls. For school identity, academic effort and academic importance, the mean scores were lower at T2 than at T1. For peer identity, family identity and general self-worth, mean scores were higher, indicating that improvement/self gain amongst mentors was perceptible over the course of the project; the differences are not statistically significant. For boys and girls, one can say that these results conform to other findings and are ‘age appropriate’. One can only speculate again that the identification with school and academic effort, competence and importance is holding up well and that involvement in the PM programme has contributed in some way to this.

Table 7: Mentor mean scores on subscales at T1 and T2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About me - mentors</th>
<th>Mean T1</th>
<th>Mean T2</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer identity</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>+0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family identity</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>+0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School identity</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic effort</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic competence</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic importance</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General self worth</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>+0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 168
School attendance, attainment and behaviour

Impact measure comprising before and after data on attainment, attendance, behaviour and ‘other’ were gathered partly to determine the feasibility of such measures, for the individual school and for the aggregate of schools. The analysis of this data is shown in table 8.

Table 8: Mentor and mentee impact audit – attainment, attendance behaviour and other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENTEES (164)</th>
<th>Attainment</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>76 (55%)</td>
<td>71 (44%)</td>
<td>26 (22%)</td>
<td>20 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>34 (25%)</td>
<td>22 (14%)</td>
<td>59 (50%)</td>
<td>32 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>28 (20%)</td>
<td>68 (42%)</td>
<td>33 (28%)</td>
<td>23 (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENTORS (136)</th>
<th>Attainment</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>84 (62%)</td>
<td>39 (29%)</td>
<td>12 (12%)</td>
<td>19 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>36 (27%)</td>
<td>28 (21%)</td>
<td>75 (76%)</td>
<td>24 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
<td>67 (50%)</td>
<td>12 (12%)</td>
<td>20 (32%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are problematic aspects to these data, even the attendance data. For the mentees, data indicate on average an improvement in attainment, no change in attendance, a slight worsening in behaviour and the ‘other’ category – commendations or detentions. For mentors, attainment improved on average, attendance got worse and behaviour and ‘other’ were unchanged. It is evident that for some young people showing problematic behaviours, while mentoring may play a part, other inputs need to be targeted, eg attendance.

These data have various problems associated with them: for attainment, depending on the two time points compared, there is an *expected* increase, as indicated in the audit guidance. Therefore an improvement is only properly registered if they have exceeded the expected rise. For attendance, different times of the year have different expected attendance rates and as pupils in the early adolescent years go through school their attendance, on average, deteriorates; some calibration could be made here. Behaviour ratings are done in different ways in different schools but there is again an expectation of a decline with the passage of time. The solution is that schools use their own data to calibrate and set the targeted figures at the outset.

**Summary of data on impact measures**
The impact data have intrinsic limitations in that comparisons of variables at two time
periods needs to take account of the expected changes over these periods: for About Me subscales, it is well known that as adolescents move up the secondary school they score lower on the pro-school subscales (Maras, 2007), and for behaviour and attendance, national normative data bear this out.

**Implications**

In evaluating the Formalised Peer Mentoring Pilot project, findings suggested that schools are engaging positively and productively with the project. Looking to the future, the following have been highlighted as relevant issues, worthy of consideration:

1. Develop ‘formalised’ peer mentoring schemes as discussed.
2. Develop training for mentees similar to that provided for mentors (e.g. list of outcomes of what they want from it). Mentees need greater clarity on what to expect from the process.
3. Attention needs to be given to attracting more boys into the role of mentor.
4. Mentees would benefit from more regular meetings with scheme coordinators to support the work of the mentor.
5. The peer mentoring scheme should not detract from mentor academic work – a consideration in the recruitment of mentors.
6. Scheme coordinators, who may have demanding workloads in addition to mentoring duties, would benefit from more training in developing processes and establishing systems. Well established peer mentoring systems enable schemes to be more self-supporting.
7. After a generally positive first year, scheme coordinators need to focus/be assisted in focusing on the development of instruments to measure the effectiveness/impact of their peer mentoring scheme. This would normally include data from two points in time on attainment, attendance and behaviour. It could involve structured instruments or organised qualitative studies.
8. Formalised Peer Mentoring needs to be seen as one strategy amongst several in the support for pupils and should link with other targeted approaches, e.g. on attendance.
The strong anecdotal/qualitative evidence provided by the mentee and mentor ‘voice’ and the quantitative evidence gathered from pupils and scheme coordinators highlighted the benefits experienced by those involved. The very positive findings provide an enhanced basis for the engagement of further schools and the opportunity for existing projects to become more embedded within internal school structures.

References


