



Annual Conference,
'Building Capacity through Future Visions'

**Mentoring in support of young people at
risk of exclusion from schools**

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During this session we will...

Consider the features of mentoring schemes which have been used in schools in the UK

Examine the features of successful mentoring of students at risk of exclusion from learning

Consider the impact of mentoring upon the sociability and learning of students



The Research Location
Former coalfield area, higher than national average unemployment, within top 18% of deprived areas in UK. High dependency rate.



Learning Mentors

The term Learning Mentor is used in the UK to refer to salaried non-teaching school support staff who work with school and college students and pupils to help them address barriers to learning (Department for Education and Skills, 2000).

Mentoring can be seen to be based upon Egan's four values (1990) which are :

- respect
- Empathy
- genuineness
- empowerment



What do learning mentors do?

Primary responsibilities are pastoral:

Critical friend to the child

An effective listener

An intermediary between child, teacher and home

Maintaining a focus upon school achievement




Methods Learning Mentor Research


Mentored pupils followed throughout a whole school year

Interviews conducted with

- 36 learning mentors
- 33 pupils in receipt of mentoring
- 11 parents/carers of mentored pupils
- 11 school governors
- 3 learning support teachers



“After a few times I knew what it were about, and it gradually got into more depth of talking and solving stuff, and I wasn’t just coming thinking, oh, I have got to go to the learning mentor. Then it were, I want to come, ‘cause I want to solve this, and that is how it started coming.”



'With my food lessons, I used to go in looking for an argument. If there was something bothering me,[I would] cause disruptions in class which meant other pupils weren't working. And then the teacher obviously every time I went into classroom would expect me to be like it. So I weren't getting no extra help off her because she weren't going to give her time up for me when I were just abusing lesson time. And then, since I've been sorting problems out, now she's got all the time for me, dinner time, after school and in lessons, and now my course work's up to date.'



Researcher: *What sort of things makes you a bit 'het' up then?*


Pupil: *'teachers....as soon as they go on about something, they don't stop..... I don't get as angry now. If I get told off I can just come straight to Mrs S [Learning Mentor] without getting told off any more.'*




Researcher: *so how do you cope when the teacher asks you to do some writing?*

Pupil: *I just write ... I got used to it now with Mrs S [Learning Mentor] and do it. Learning mentor just told me what I would get if I refuse and punishment'*


When I come and see her when I have been naughty, she like calms me down and ... if I get into trouble, she can help me out, like she tells me to go and apologise and stuff like that.'



“I had a lot of problems which caused me to be having problems in me lessons with me work and learning and concentration, with me anger. And when I come to [Learning Mentor] we have gone through ways and why I am angry, to sort them out, which led me to sorting the work out and getting things in on time and why I were getting angry with teachers and to sort my relations out with teachers which was starting to improve my work.”




“We [Learning mentor and pupil] go through the cycle of me going into the classroom and being angry and abusive and then the teacher comes back at me with an argument. And then I just go back again and we go through a cycle that works out why the teacher’s mad at me and how they are going to feel after I embarrass them in front of the class by shouting back at them. Which then makes me think about if I change the way I am towards teachers, because I really intimidate them when I’m shouting at them in front of all that many pupils, they’ll have time for me to work through my work..”



'the main thing were trying to help me read...sometimes they [teachers] say read this paragraph and I didn't like it. I used to try and get out of it. So like I never used to do a lot so eventually I got into trouble for it...'

'..I didn't get pushed into it, [mentoring] / got offered it...[mentoring] because I was expected to get like a low 5 or maybe a 4 and in my SATS [English] , I came out with a six.'

(student aged 14 years)



Researcher: *“Can you give me – perhaps think about one particular way in which you have been helped?”*

Pupil: *“Coming back to school as I was off for three months, and she [Learning Mentor] persuaded me to come back.”*

Pupil : *“what sort of things were done to help you get back in?”*

Pupil : *“All the support she said she was going to give me which she has. Like sitting at the back of the class for a couple of days. Helping me to get away from other students because I was getting bullied.”*



What do volunteer mentors do?

Responsibilities are wholly pastoral

Critical friend to the child

An effective listener

May sometimes be an intermediary between child, teacher and home

A commitment to engaging the child in the local community



Volunteer Mentors

People drawn from the community with no professional qualifications related to children.


Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked and interviewed for suitability

Provided with training by experienced professionals from children's services



Methods Volunteer Mentor Research

- Semi-structured interviews conducted with:
 - volunteer mentors (N=6)
 - pupils (N=9)
 - parents/carers (N=5)
 - project managers (N=2)
 - Teachers (N=5)
- Scrutiny of project documentation
- Scrutiny of Local Authority performance data in respect of attendance and exclusions
- Scrutiny of school records of rewards and sanctions
- Illustrative case studies

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- Volunteer mentor scheme established in an area with poor socio-economic indicators in a North Midlands Local Authority.
 - Volunteers with no professional experience of working with children provided with training by project co-ordinator and volunteer bureau.
 - Volunteers matched to individual pupils.
 - Pupils given choice of participation in scheme.
 - Pupils (aged 11 – 14) selected on the basis of behaviours which were negatively impacting upon school performance and likely to lead to exclusion from school.
 - Mentoring programme for individuals scheduled to run for periods of six months.
 - Mentors provided with small financial allowance to fund activities with pupils.



Parent views

Interviewer: how did you feel about XXX having a mentor when you first heard about the scheme?

Parent/carer: I thought it was a load of rubbish, if you want my opinion. I don't believe in people having extra treats because they have been naughty. And that is what I perceived it to be. Taking him out for meals and taking him bowling.

Interviewer: Did your opinion change?

Parent/carer: Yes it did in the end.

Interviewer: So, why did it change?

Parent/carer: 'cause I saw it were good for XXX

Interviewer: In what ways? How did he change?

Parent/carer: He is a lot more calmer now. Definitely. Doesn't chuck as often/And one row he had had with his mum, he would actually ring his mentor and talk to her, rather than he would have shut the door before and said I am leaving home and gone up the road. So in that respect, yeah.

Interviewer: And has that improvement been maintained (since finishing on the scheme)?

Parent/carer: Definitely. Yeah



Amy (not her real name): *'I was having trouble with my mum and it was just someone to talk to so that I could get more confidence out of myself. I were just having a lot of trouble with my mum.'*

'it was sort of getting self-esteem out of myself and get more confidence when speaking to other people.'

'we used to meet like once a week and then we slowly got it down to like once every fortnight and we just gradually stopped doing it.'

The mother, in a separate interview, told the researcher that mentoring had

'made a lot of difference to her (Amy's) behaviour and personality. She tells me she loves me now which she didn't before. If she sends me a text message she says she loves me...its made things better at home. She's not as moody. It's made us a lot closer. Before, we didn't get on. We have had no problems now for past two years.'



Interviewer: Did it make much difference to you, do you think, as a person?

Pupil: Yeah, it did really

Interviewer: In what kind of ways?

Pupil: It helped me get to the bottom of things

Interviewer: Has it made any difference to you in school?

Pupil: Yeah, actually I think it did me good. Made me better.

Interviewer: Better in what ways?

Pupil: Concentrating more in school and things.

Interviewer: And has that continued since you stopped having a mentor?

Pupil: Yeah



Teacher views

Interviewer: In terms of the impact of the scheme, the three lads I interviewed this morning said they their behaviour has improved both in home and in school. Is that your general impression?

Teacher: Definitely. Yes. Because, it's not just their behaviour, it is their personalities that have come out, they are far more confident, they are more willing to speak to adults about how they feel and it is a massive thing for a 12, 13, 14 year old person to go and meet adults...And they have grown, it has been a massive thing for them and the students that come in, they smile and they make a bit of eye contact, and that is a vast improvement on where they were prior to the scheme.



Quantitative data

Of those pupils who had received support from a volunteer mentor over a six month period (N=46) 72% had shown improvements in school attendance.

In the same population none of the pupils received school exclusion whilst being supported by a volunteer mentor.



Overall findings

- The use of mentors has been successful in providing support to pupils.
- The interventions of mentors have had a positive impact upon rates of attendance and prevention of exclusions.
- Pupils on the mentoring scheme have demonstrated improved attitudes and behaviours in school.
- Pupils in receipt of mentoring have shown accelerated progress in respect of learning



What might be the factors which contribute to the success of mentoring?

A focus upon:

Unconditional positive regard – the communication of an absolute acceptance of an individual's worth

Empathy – the ability to see the point of view of another and to express an understanding of feelings

Congruence – communicating an honest reaction to an individual – good or bad.

(see Rogers 1980)

The separation of volunteers from established adult figures of authority



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