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Evaluation of Fostering Network Scottish Care Leavers Mentoring Projects

Final Report

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1   Introduction

Care Leavers

Looked after children and young people are some of the most vulnerable in our society. *For Scotland's Children* highlighted the 'continuing failure of many local authorities as 'corporate parents' to provide these young people with the care and education they are entitled to by law' (Scottish Executive, 2001, p. 10). One of the major issues facing looked after young people is the process of transition from care to independence. It is a time when they have 'a right to expect the sort of help that loving parents would provide for their children, help to reach their full potential, and the same chance to make mistakes secure in the knowledge that there is a safety net of support' (Jamieson, 2002, p. 2).

However, over a number of years, research has highlighted the poor outcomes for children leaving care. Longitudinal studies which have followed up children and young people in care as part of national cohort studies present the stark contrast in life outcomes between those who have experienced care and those who have not. Cheung and Heath (1994) compare these two groups at age 33. Only one-fifth of those who had been in care had achieved O levels compared to one-third of those who had not; only half as many had achieved A levels. Only one in a hundred of those who had been in care achieved a university degree compared to one on ten of those who had not. Two-fifths of those who had been in care had no formal qualifications compared to one in seven (Cheung and Heath, 1994). This lack of qualifications converted into

lack of success in the job market with three times as many being unemployed (10.8 % compared to 3.6 %) and larger proportions having manual jobs as opposed to professional or non-manual jobs.

Recent research in Scotland confirms the bleak picture which has previously been painted in terms of the outcomes of care leavers (Action on Aftercare Consortium, 1996; Biehal, Clayden, Stein and Wade, 1995; Stein, 1997). A survey of care leavers identified that: the majority of care leavers had poor education outcomes with only 39% having one or more standard grades; over half were unemployed; many of the young people had experienced mobility and homelessness (Dixon and Stein, 2002; 2003).

Baldwin, Coles and Mitchell (1997) acknowledge the 'reality of deprivation, disadvantage and disenfranchisement' but argue that 'behind these gloomy statistics lie complex biographies of young people leaving care' (Baldwin et al, 1997, p. 91). This has perhaps been most dramatically represented in the research by Jackson and Martin on 'high achievers' from the care system (Jackson and Martin, 1998; Martin and Jackson, 2002). Of the 38 'high achievers', only one was unemployed, none were in custody, three-quarters were in rented private accommodation or their own home and only one was homeless (Jackson and Martin, 1998, p. 576). This contrasts markedly with the comparison group in the study and with the figures on outcomes for care leavers outlined above. The factors identified as protective and most strongly associated

with later educational success related to: stability and continuity; carers who valued education and engagement with education; developing out-of-school interests and hobbies; and meeting a significant adult who offered consistent support and encouragement and acted as a mentor and possibly role model.

Young people tend to leave care early and their transition to independence tends to be compressed. Dixon and Stein (2002) also highlighted that:

> *Young people are unlikely to manage in adversity without a network of formal and informal support. However, research evidence suggests that many are unable to rely on consistent support from their families… and that formal sources of support have a tendency to fall away in the period after legal discharge. (Dixon and Stein, 2002, p. 2)*

They therefore recommend that

> *In developing strategies for improving education, employment and training, consideration will need to be given to the provision of formal or informal personal support. (Dixon and Stein, 2002, p. 141)*

Mentoring young people

Over recent years there has been an increase in the number of mentoring initiatives which link young people to volunteer mentors. A recent survey of befriending and mentoring in Scotland identified 277 projects of which nearly three-quarters (200) included work with disadvantaged children and young people up to the age of 25 (Befriending Network Scotland, 2005, p. 10). The Befriending Network suggested that it was important to clarify differences between different types of projects and suggested a model based on the nature of the objectives of the supportive relationship, and on the importance given to achieving those objectives through the relationship.

The Befriending / Mentoring Spectrum
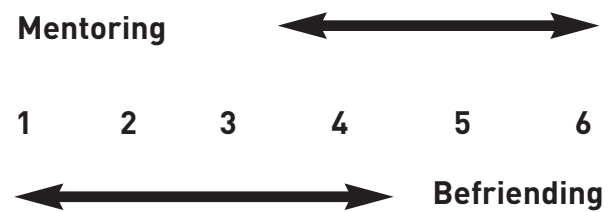
(Befriending Network Scotland, 2005, p.52)

Types 1 and 2 are classified as Befriending where the role of the volunteer is to provide informal social support and form a trusting relationship over time. In Type 2 there may be additional stated objectives such as increasing involvement in community activities but the success of the relationship is not dependent on these being achieved. Types 3 and 4 are classified as Befriending/Mentoring. In Type 3, the role of the volunteer is to provide informal social support and through this supportive relationship to go on to achieve stated objectives which are reviewed over time. In Type 4, the role of the volunteer is to develop objectives over time and initially, the role is to develop a relationship in order to establish a level of trust on which objective setting can be based. Types 5 and 6 are classified as Mentoring. In Type 5, the role of the volunteer is to work with the client to meet objectives which are agreed at the start of the relationship.

These are achieved through the development of a trusting relationship but retains a focus on the objectives. Type 6 involves the volunteer working with the client solely on agreed objectives which are clearly stated at the start. Meetings focus primarily on meeting objectives and any social relationship is incidental (Befriending Network Scotland, 2005, pp 52-53). On the basis of this typology, it was found that Befriending/Mentoring Projects (61 %) and Mentoring Projects (54 %) were more likely to work with young people than Companionship/Befriending Projects (39 %); highlighting the focus on objective setting with this age group (Befriending Network Scotland, 2005, p. 21).

While this typology provides a useful framework for a distinction between befriending and mentoring, Hall (2003) highlights the issue of definition in relation to mentoring and states that:

> *The terminology surrounding mentors, mentoring and mentees is bewilderingly various, vague and sometimes misleading... (Hall, 2003, p. 3)*

> *... in many ways it is ill-defined and it occupies contested territory somewhere between those who would see it as all warm and comforting and those who regard it as an ill-disguised attempt to maintain existing power relations by shifting attention away from social inequalities to the alleged inadequacies of individuals (Hall, 2003, p.5)*

Pawson lists the ways in which the activities going on under the name of mentoring have been described by researchers:

> ... helping, coaching, tutoring, counseling, sponsoring, role modeling, befriending, bonding, trusting, mutual learning, direction setting, progress chasing, sharing experience, providing respite, sharing a laugh, widening horizons, building resilience, showing ropes, informal apprenticeships, providing openings, kindness of strangers, sitting by Nellie, treats for bad boys and girls, the Caligula phenomenon, power play, tours of middle class life, etc. etc. (Pawson, 2004a)

Hall describes a number of typologies and classifications of mentoring and draws out from these four dimensions which he characterizes as follows:

1. the origin of the mentoring relationship- to what extent is it a 'naturally occurring' relationship or one that has been artificially promoted?

2. the purpose of the mentoring – to what extent is it instrumental (akin to inducting the apprentice into a craft or profession) or expressive (guiding the naïve and undeveloped youth into responsible adulthood)?...

3. the nature of the mentoring relationship – is it a one-to-one relationship or one-to-a- group?

4. the site of the mentoring – to what extent is it 'site-based' (for example, tied to a school or

college) or 'community-based' (situated in the young person's family, community or wider social sphere).

(Hall, 2003, pp. 8-9)

Pawson suggest three core concepts as the framework of a model of mentoring; concepts that 'are used over and again in the literature as ways of describing differences in the mentor/mentee relationship and as explanations of why some partnerships seem to flourish better than others' (Pawson, 2004a). The three concepts are:

i) Status differences (the respective social standing of the partners)

ii) Reference group position (the social identity of mentor and protégé)

iii) Mentoring mechanism (the interpersonal strategy that affects change)

(Pawson, 2004a)

What works in mentoring

In the United States, mentoring schemes have a long history and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America now involves over 500 local agencies (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). The evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000) involved a randomised control trial of 959 children and young people, half of whom were allocated to the mentoring initiative and half were placed on a waiting list until the end of the 18 month follow-up. The research found that: substantially fewer of the

mentored young people had started using illegal drugs at the end of the study period; fewer had started using alcohol; academic behaviour, attitudes and performance were better; the quality of relationships with parents or guardians was better; the quality of relationships with peers was better. There were no overall impacts on self-worth, self-confidence or social acceptance, however, and no systematic differences in participation in social and cultural activities (Tierney et al., 2000). The factors associated with effectiveness of the programme were: a high level of contact; mentor relationship defined as a friend and not a teacher or preacher; a supportive, holistic developmental approach; volunteer screening; mentor training; matching procedures; and intensive supervision and support of each match involving frequent contact with parent, volunteer and young person (Tierney et al., 2000). These findings are important given that the Befriending Network survey found that 'all projects believe that the supportive relationships that they initiate achieve outcomes relating to increases in confidence, self-esteem and a reduction in isolation for young people' (Befriending Network Scotland, 2005, p. 4).

DuBois et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analytic review of 55 independent studies or reports of mentoring programmes and concluded that the 'findings of this investigation provide support for the effectiveness of youth mentoring programmes' (DuBois et al., 2002). The study found that statistical results were 'consistent with a positive effect of mentoring programs on all five types of outcomes examined (i.e., emotional/psychological, problem/high-

risk behavior, social competence, academic/educational, and career/employment), although only to a marginal extent for emotional/psychological adjustment' (DuBois et al., 2002). The authors caution, however, that 'it may be most appropriate to expect the typical youth participating in a mentoring program to receive benefits that are quite modest in terms of absolute magnitude' (DuBois et al., 2002). They suggest that this finding is 'seemingly inconsistent with the widespread and largely unquestioned support that mentoring initiatives have enjoyed in recent years' (DuBois et al., 2002). The DuBois et al. (2002) review also found support for the view that mentoring programmes offer the greatest potential benefit to youth who are vulnerable or at-risk.

Grossman and Rhodes (2002) hypothesized that the effects of mentoring relationships will intensify over time and that relatively short matches will actually be disruptive to youth. The study made use of longitudinal data from the evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters programmes and all mentored youth were categorized on the basis of the length of their mentoring relationships.

> *Youth who were in matches that terminated within the first 3 months suffered significant declines in their global self-worth and their perceived scholastic competence. On the other hand, youth who were in matches that lasted more than 12 months reported significant increases in their self-worth, perceived social acceptance, perceived scholastic competence, parental relationship*

quality, school value, and decreases in both drug and alcohol use (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002)

The research also found that mentor relationships were more likely to be shorter if: adolescents were older rather than younger; adolescents had experienced emotional, sexual or physical abuse; volunteer mentors had higher rather than lower incomes; volunteers were married and aged 26 – 30 (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002)

Hall summarized his review of 'what works' in mentoring:

> *The US literature has identified a number of key features which help to make mentoring schemes successful. These include: monitoring of program implementation; screening of prospective mentors; matching of mentors and youth on relevant criteria; both pre-match and on-going training; supervision; support for mentors; structured activities for mentors and youth; parental support and involvement; frequency of contact and length of relationship.*

> *The UK literature reminds us that mentoring needs to be properly integrated into its organizational context and establish appropriate links with other services and opportunities. (Hall, 2003, p. 20)*

Clayden and Stein (2002) state that mentoring for young people in the UK is becoming increasingly popular in policies to tackle disadvantage, social exclusion and enhance citizenship, but

has been under-researched. They carried out a review of the Prince's Trust and Camelot Foundation's Leaving Care Initiative. Two-thirds of the young people who had a personal goal said that their mentor had helped them to achieve it. Young people considered that mentors provided support on an emotional and practical level (Clayden & Stein, 2002). In Scotland, the Matches Mentoring Project for care leavers was funded by the Prince's Trust. The evaluation of the project highlighted some of the difficulties in engaging with this group of young people. Over the life of the project, 39 young people had been referred; 14 had been matched with a mentor but only 2 matches were ongoing at the time of the evaluation (Ridley, 2003, p. 16). The project recruited 61 volunteer mentors but there was a high drop out rate. The study found that 'while young people found it difficult to describe in concrete terms what difference having a mentor had made to them' (Ridley, 2003, p. 25), overall they were helped in a range of areas and there were clearly positive achievements, though not for all the young people (Ridley, 2003, p. 27).

The findings show that mentors were helping young people most with independent living skills and personal and inter-personal skills such as developing self confidence and, to a lesser extent, goal setting (Ridley, 2003, p. 31)

The evaluation of Mentoring Plus also identified positive outcomes for the young people who participated (Shiner, Young, Newburn and Groben, 2004a). The evaluation followed up young people involved in 10 Mentoring Plus projects

over 18 months and compared outcomes to those of a comparison group. The report concluded:

The research challenges the old – admittedly mistaken – adage that 'nothing works'. It shows that positive interventions can be made that help to bring about fairly substantial changes in the lives of even the most highly disaffected young people. Mentoring Plus… recruited and engaged actively with a large number of young people who were at considerable risk of social exclusion…. Most importantly, perhaps, it was also reasonably successful in encouraging these young people to (re)engage with education and work. And the related benefits of the programme, in terms of social inclusion, may be both significant and far-reaching. (Shiner et al., 2004a, p. 71)

However, this research found that mentoring had differential levels of impact on different aspects of the young people's lives.

Thus, in terms of change, it was in relation to social inclusion that the movement was most marked, rather than in relation to offending or drug/alcohol use. (Shiner et al., 2004a, p. 71)

While mentoring projects have been shown to be effective, the complexities of the mentoring relationship have also been highlighted.

It is clear that planned mentoring is not a 'magic bullet' that is capable of solving all the problems

facing young people and those charged with working with them. Structural constraints continue to exert a powerful influence on the trajectories of such vulnerable young people: the influence of poverty; early childhood difficulties and inequalities in health impacted strongly on the lives of young people… The development of a mentoring relationship, however, may enhance the capacity to reflect on these issues and to be better able to negotiate services and support in certain circumstances (Philip, Shucksmith and King, 2004, p. 49)

Scottish Care Leavers Mentoring Project

In the context, then, of the increasing knowledge about the effectiveness of mentoring with young people, the Scottish Care Leavers Mentoring Project was funded by the Scottish Executive and a number of trusts and grant making bodies. Its remit was to support the establishment of six mentoring projects for young people leaving care, in partnership with local authority departments and local agencies. Each project would recruit volunteer mentors from the local community, provide training and match mentors with a young person. Within the mentoring relationship, each care leaver would be encouraged to identify realistic but challenging personal goals and their mentor would provide support and guidance to enable them to achieve these. It was envisaged that the

mentoring relationship would initially last for an average of 9 – 12 months with regular meetings over this period.

It was planned that the projects would be established in a staggered way over the three years of funding. In fact, only five of the six projects achieved 'take-off' during the funding cycle. Two of the projects had been fully operational for less than a year at the point Scottish Executive funding ended in April 2005. The established projects are located both in voluntary agencies and in local authorities, and those in local authorities are supported by different departments. The complex organizational contexts of the projects have impacted to different degrees on the successful implementation of the projects' aims and objectives.

Support from the Scottish Executive was made available on the basis of developing schemes with clear differences around geographical spread and responsibilities, financing models and arrangements, and organizational context, and it was hoped that evaluation would be able to contrast and compare outcomes across projects. The timescale of establishment of the five projects, and the limited resources of the evaluation means that it was not possible to track the outcomes of large numbers of mentoring relationships. On the other hand, some of the key differences in setting and model of operation help demonstrate a degree of consistency in the factors which seem to be linked to positive results and those less so.

2   The Research

The research could not provide a full evaluation of all the mentoring projects. Initially, it was decided to undertake more detailed research in the first two projects to be set up and to carry out a small number of interviews in the remaining four projects to provide contextual information. The research also relied on the projects' own monitoring and evaluation records for information. As one of the projects identified for more detailed research encountered delays in establishing mentoring relationships, the research on the project was more limited than anticipated. In addition, as will be seen, one project was not set up. The evaluation, therefore, focuses in detail on the first project to be established with contextual information on the remaining four projects. The aims of the research were set out to provide a process and outcome evaluation, focusing on:

- development of policies and procedures for the projects;

- recruitment, selection, training and support of volunteer mentors;

- referral and selection of young people and matching with volunteer mentors

- support of the mentoring relationship and young people

- outcomes for young people

- outcomes for mentors

- liaison and inter-agency relationships.

Complementary research methods have been used and consist of four main methods:

- documentary analysis

- face-to-face and telephone semi-structured interviews

- group interviews

- attendance at meetings and events

The research began in June 2003 and continued until May 2005.

Data collection to the present has involved:

Glenshire:

- collection of documents and records relating to 15 mentors, 14 mentees and 14 mentor – mentee relationships;

- attendance at Advisory Group meetings and mentor support meetings

- 3 interviews with the Glenshire mentoring co-ordinator: one focusing on general issues, one interview focusing on progress of each of the mentor-mentee relationships from the first recruitment round, and one final interview reflecting on the development of the project

- exit interviews with three Glenshire mentors who left the project;

- one group interview with four Glenshire mentors;

- four telephone interviews with members of the Glenshire project Advisory Group;

- one final interview with the Glenshire manager providing an overview of the project.

- plans to undertake peer-interviewing of young people could not be taken forward because of limitations on resources both within the research team and in the mentoring project itself. This does mean that there is limited feedback from the young people about the mentoring process.

Wallaceshire:

- collection of information relating to mentor-mentee relationships provided on an anonymous basis;

- attendance at Advisory Group meetings

- two interviews with the Wallaceshire mentoring co-ordinator: one focusing on general issues and, one final interview reflecting on the development of the project;

- four interviews with members of the Wallaceshire Advisory Group.

Voluntary Agency

- collection of information relating to mentor-mentee relationships provided on an anonymous basis;

- one interview with two mentoring co-ordinators and the senior worker discussing general issues and reflecting on the development of the project.

Bruce City and Drummondshire

- collection of information relating to mentor-mentee relationships provided on an anonymous basis;

- one interview with the mentoring co-ordinator discussing general issues and reflecting on the development of the project.

Scottish Fostering Network:

- regular up-date meetings were held between the research team and the Fostering Network Co-ordinator;

- three interviews were conducted with the Fostering Network Co-ordinator: one initial interview and two final interviews

Residential Weekend

- Volunteer mentors were invited to a residential weekend at the beginning of February 2005 by the Fostering Network. Members of the research team attended on both days of the weekend and took this opportunity to conduct two group interviews and distribute questionnaires to those who attended to gain their opinion and views of their experience of being a mentor. All projects were represented by these volunteers and all 15 completed a questionnaire and took part in the interviews.

Case Studies

- 2 interviews involving both a mentor and a young person were

carried out by the Fostering Network Co-ordinator. Transcripts of the interviews were made available to the research team.

The research was approved by the University of Strathclyde University Ethics Committee and informed consent was gained from young people and mentors. Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality. Quotes are either verbatim, as transcribed from taped interviews or notes taken in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

3   The Mentoring Projects

In this section we will give an overview of the organizational context of each project. A brief outline of the development and the key issues facing each of the projects is given below in order of the sequence in which they developed. The projects were set up in a variety of ways; some were based within local authorities, others were located in voluntary agencies. Although the mentoring was targeted at care leavers, the projects identified different specific target groups; in some the young people were in residential care; in others they had moved on from care. The timescale of the development of the projects also varied.

Glenshire

The first project to be established, Glenshire located mentoring in the Through and After Care team of the Social Work Department. At the outset a designated manager with sufficient delegated responsibility and executive authority to command the support of both key social work services staff as well as control over resources was notably helpful in instilling and sustaining a strong sense of ownership and commitment. Following consultation with service providers and some young people themselves, the decision was made to focus exclusively on young people who were known to the Through and After Care service and who had been living in more or less independent accommodation for periods usually exceeding 6 months. An early intention to include young people with disabilities who were living at home was not followed up in practice.

Operational responsibility was placed on the manager of the Through & After Care service who also took on the role as project coordinator until an appointment was made. Whatever the obvious disadvantages, the 'by-product' of this was consolidation of the agency's understanding of and realistic commitment to the mentoring scheme. Undoubtedly this played a significant part in embedding mentoring as an integral part of the 'capacity-building' services made available to young care leavers in need of further, targeted support. This has also ensured its durability when external support came to an end.

A multi-disciplinary advisory group, representing a wide range of stakeholders, including Who Cares? Scotland, has been active from the outset. The first meeting of the advisory group took place in January 2003. It has played a significant role in supporting the work and achievements of the project and in helping put some of the inevitable difficulties it has faced in context. It has also exerted influence across represented agencies. The local housing service which is represented on the Advisory Group has been keen to include referrals from the considerable number of young vulnerable people which it accommodates. Although this has not been possible up to now, it remains a possibility that it will seek to develop a similar service in the future.

In Glenshire, recruitment of mentors began in March 2003 and, following induction training in May, 10 mentors were recruited in June 2003. The part-time mentor co-ordinator was appointed

in July 2003. Mentees were recruited in July and August and matched from September through to October 2003. A second round of recruitment was undertaken in March 2004.

Wallaceshire

One of the earliest to express an initial interest, this agency's interest was driven not by Social Work but by the youth services section of Community Services within the authority. Community Services offered financial, staffing and management support to the project from the outset. This department viewed mentoring as a way not only of providing additional support and focus to a young person's life but also of connecting them with at least some of the services they provided as an authority. The mentoring process was linked explicitly to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in relation to goal-oriented activities. Similar to other agencies, once it became clear that support in principle was forthcoming from social work services, an advisory group was established and the first meeting of Wallaceshire Young People's Mentoring Project took place in October 2003. The target group was identified as young people aged 15+ who are, or have been, looked after and accommodated by the Council, and more specifically, young people in the council's residential children's units.

Wallaceshire experienced a number of difficulties in establishing the scheme. At an early stage, personnel changes in social work meant that communication between the mentoring project and social work and the residential units was problematic. There were issues in terms of residential staff 'owning' the

mentoring project. This was both in relation to the involvement of social work and residential staff in the Advisory Group and in the involvement of staff within the units. This meant that there were delays in recruiting young people and in supporting the commitment of the young people to the mentoring process. It also meant that there were problems in resolving issues when they were identified.

In Wallaceshire, recruitment of mentors began in November 2003 and training in December 2003. Mentees began to be recruited in January 2004 and continued through to September 2004.

Drummondshire

Unlike any of the other agencies, Drummondshire had already committed to and was successfully running a broadly comparable scheme for disadvantaged young people, though exclusively focused on young people involved with the criminal justice system. Exploratory meetings started in November 2002 and these culminated in a multi-agency Advisory Group meeting in March 2003. The principle, methods and realities of developing another scheme were discussed and enthusiastically supported by the various stakeholders. Following a period of substantial consultation, agreement was reached on a target group of young people – those aged $15^{1/2}$ plus, in the process of moving from residential care, particularly residential school placements, into less supported settings in the community. To some extent this decision was influenced by their knowledge that some of the young people involved in the criminal justice mentoring scheme might have benefited

from an earlier experience of positive contact with a dependable adult.

Agreement, however, was not reached on who the host agency would be and how the service would be funded. Discussions re-started in November 2003 and it was agreed that the service would be hosted by Drummondshire Council's Youth Justice Team, alongside the existing mentoring service, and would be funded by the Council. The previous developmental work was put to good use and the service developed extremely rapidly. As with Glenshire, this project is firmly embedded in the local authority's mainstream services but it also capitalises on the benefits of being able to share in many of the extant procedures for administering, recruiting and supporting mentors and mentees. The coordinator's role extends to both projects but he is, unusually, available on a full-time basis and is unique amongst staff in these projects in having considerable related experience.

While this project had some qualms about the risks of engaging successfully with such vulnerable young people, particularly in the context of working with traditionally institutional care settings, the hope was that the coordinator's former experience as a unit manager of a children's residential unit should help compensate. He was able to appreciate some of the peculiar dynamics of communication within these establishments and, especially within the authority's units, he was able to negotiate with both managers and staff in a way which conveyed confidence in the potential of mentoring as well as helping them find constructive ways of supporting young people to follow through on their interest. This influence did not extend so effectively to

residential schools where a variety of difficulties were encountered at various levels, ranging from ensuring appointments made to see staff were honoured, through to ensuring young people were reminded of proposed contacts with mentors. This was a common problem facing coordinators across all projects where mentees were based in any care, but especially residential school, setting.

Although the advisory group was programmed to meet on a regular basis, in practice attendance quickly diminished; perhaps in the light of the swift and transparent development and success of the project's work, members no longer perceived any obvious benefit in attending. Whatever, its existence at an earlier stage had probably played an instrumental part in helping ensure the agency fulfil its earlier commitment.

Recruitment of mentors began in April 2004 with training undertaken in May – June. Recruitment of mentees took place between July and October 2004 with first meetings happening between July and November.

Campbellshire

Discussions started in February 2003 with Campbellshire Council Social Work Department Throughcare and Youth Justice Teams about a joint service aimed at young people making the transition out of the care system into adulthood and more independent living, who were also involved in/at risk of involvement in offending behaviour. Following a series of meetings, a multi-agency advisory group was convened and consultation took place with young people in August-September 2003.

Further advisory group meetings took place in November 2003 and January 2004. Despite a very enthusiastic commitment to the principle of introducing mentoring, changes in key personnel resulted in ongoing delays in setting up the project. Various sustained efforts to resume the project were tried but it seems clear that a lack of time and capacity to undertake the essential task of planning the development was the instrumental factor rather than a lack of interest.

Bruce City

The idea for this project emerged from informal discussions between a large voluntary organisation in Scotland and Fostering Network, at which it was agreed that a meeting of suitable agencies in this area should be used to test out support. This was convened in November 2003. There was overwhelming support for the principle and as a result, it was agreed that a housing peer education service for young people accommodated by Bruce City Council would host the mentoring scheme. Key local agencies involved in setting up the service included: Bruce City Council Social Work Throughcare and Residential Care Services, Bruce City Council Culture and Leisure Services and the Youth Social Inclusion Partnership. Funding for an initial period of 12 months was obtained from the Laidlaw Youth Project in April 2004. Though the agency had considerable experience in supporting peer-based initiatives for relatively disadvantaged youth, mentoring was a novel development and a part-time mentor coordinator was recruited in July 2004.

A short period of consultation resulted in the identification of similar target groups to elsewhere, namely accommodated young people and those being supported by through and after care services. In this case it was agreed that only accommodated children with advanced plans to leave formal accommodation would be considered eligible, with the focus being upon helping them bridge the gap between highly structured care and the relatively unsupported options in the community.

The model for the development of this project has been different from many others, raising the spectre that the potential difficulties which separation of management and support of the project from the source of referrals might result in confusion, lack of clarity and communication and an absence of mutual accountability. In fact, the developments within this project indicate that:

- This small-scale and localised voluntary organisation, though distinctly separate from its main referring agents, has both the established reputation and confidence to engage constructively with a host of agencies, using principles of negotiation wherever possible, but also utilising some element of challenge and confrontation when this is needed.

- Although difficulties with all care providers, but especially residential schools, have occurred they have nevertheless experienced positive relationships.

Volunteer mentors were recruited in May 2004 and underwent training in May-June. Young people were recruited between September and November, with first meetings taking place from September 2004 and February 2005.

Voluntary Agency

Exploratory meetings with representatives of three projects started in October 2003. The original stimulus resulted from the participation of a member of staff in Glenshire's advisory group. It was agreed that the service would be offered predominantly to young people aged 14-17 making the transition from intensive involvement with the Children's Hearings Fast Track Initiative, with two places made available to young people supported by an alternative to secure project. This project is managed and run by two projects of a larger national voluntary agency.

While formal responsibility for managing this project rests with a large voluntary organisation, the actual responsibility for running and coordinating the project rests with two workers; one from the Fast Track Initiative and one from the alternative to secure care project. This arrangement appears to work successfully.

The only criteria for eligibility is involvement in 'Fast Track' Children's Hearings, i.e. all children must have experienced a significant history of offending behaviour and face the serious prospect of removal from the community usually on the grounds of 'community safety' as much as 'welfare' considerations in relation to the 'child', or, if already accommodated, are likely to become the subject of secure measures. While a more specific, coherent cohort in some respects, the actual diversity of this population is remarkable with some children as young as 10 years of age being referred and matched successfully, as well as those who are in their mid-teens. While only very impressionistic at this early stage, it would appear that some of these much younger people – and their families and social workers – have been very receptive to the prospect and reality of mentoring and the development of relationships appears to have been very successful by any measure used.

The key difficulty with the project has, perhaps surprisingly, been with the internal decision-making processes of the voluntary organisation. It was the view of numerous people who witnessed the earlier stages of its development that delays in processing requests for information, for authorising actions and for taking the simplest decisions were unaccountably delayed and there was rigidity and inflexibility in practice.

In Voluntary Agency, mentors were recruited in May 2004, with training taking place in June and July. Young people were recruited between August and October and first meetings began to take place in September 2004.

4   The Mentoring Process

In this chapter, we will consider the process of establishing the mentoring relationships and the outcomes of the relationships by the end of the study period. We will look at the recruitment and training of mentors and mentees, the support to them through the mentoring relationship, and the outcomes and perceived benefits of the mentoring relationships. It must be stressed that for a number of the projects, mentoring relationships had been established for a relatively short period of time by the end of the study period.

Recruitment

We saw above that recruitment, training and establishment of mentoring relationships varied widely across the different projects. Table 1 displays this chronologically, taking the start of the recruitment process as when registration packs were first issued and received back.

Table 1: Recruitment of participants

Project	Volunteers	Young people	First Meeting
Glenshire (1st round)	March 03	July 03	September 03
Wallaceshire	October 03	January 04	April 04
Glenshire (2nd round)	March 04	June 04	July 04
Drummondshire	April 04	July 04	July 04
Voluntary Agency	May 04	August 04	September 04
Bruce City	May 04	Not known	September 04

However, the timescale for setting up the mentoring relationships was longer than had been planned for.

> *from briefing workers to having young people ready to be matched in actual fact probably ended up more as almost 4 months, double the amount of time that we had anticipated and again it looks like that is going to be the experience elsewhere. (Fostering Network co-ordinator)*

Recruitment of volunteer mentors

Recruitment of mentors took place in a number of different ways. These were, in the main, through newspaper advertising, the local colleges, and volunteer centres. In general, newspaper advertising was considered to have been the most fruitful recruiting method.

> *It was slow to begin with, then did the advertising; would say the best recruiting was through adverts. (project co-ordinator)*

The recruitment process followed a similar vein across the projects with a few variations. In general, volunteers were asked to complete an application form, attend an informal interview, five training sessions and then a formal interview. During this time references and a Disclosure Scotland check were requested.

> *I went to a volunteer centre in [town], where I come from. I just went in there and asked them about what volunteer work was available, and they put me in touch.*

> *...what I do remember is writing on my application form – it asked you the question, 'How did you find out about this?' – and I wrote it was an advert in a local paper and I put in brackets that it was a decent size advert, that you could see. Sometimes the adverts are so small that they are a waste of time them being there. So it was a good clear advert.*

The recruitment process across the different projects identified similar numbers of mentors: Glenshire 1st round - 13 mentors (one left before meeting their matched young person, one left after meeting their match); Glenshire 2nd round – 5 mentors (one left); Wallaceshire – 10 mentors (one withdrew before being formally recruited); Drummondshire – 11 mentors (one withdrew after the formal interview); Voluntary agency - 10 mentorsrs (one was signposted elsewhere after the training); Bruce City – 7 mentors initially and 1 more at a later date.

The recruitment process (i.e. from when the volunteer's registration packs were returned to their formal interview) took between six and 10 weeks although the process of training also took place in this period (Table 2).

Table 2: Turnaround time for mentors (average weeks)

Project	Pack returned to formal interview	Formal interview to 1st meeting	Pack returned to 1st meeting
Glenshire (1st round)	7 (n=9)	13 (n=9)	20 (n=8)
Wallaceshire	6 (n=9)	22 (n=7)	28 (n=7)
Glenshire (2nd round)	10 (n=5)	10 (n=4)	20 (n=4)
Drummondshire	10 (n=10)	13 (n=10)	23 (n=10)
Voluntary Agency	6 (n=8)	14 (n=9)	20 (n=8)
Bruce City	8 (n=5)	20 (n=7)	28 (n=5)

From the point of the formal interview to the first meeting with the young people was longer and ranged from an average of 10 to 22 weeks. This reveals that once the formal recruitment process was completed volunteers had to wait a considerable length of time to meet their match. While for most this stage took either approximately the same time or twice as long as the recruitment process, in one project it took almost four times as long. The whole process, from when volunteers registered their interest to meeting a young person, took on average between 20 to 28 weeks across the projects.

Glenshire is the only project at present which has had two recruitment drives and table 2 shows that while the waiting period to meeting a young person decreased, the turnaround time for the whole process remained the same.

The volunteers who attended the residential weekend rated the formal recruitment process highly, supported by the general agreement expressed in the group interviews that this was a smooth process. While there was, again, general agreement that that there was a long wait to meet the young people, most did not think the length of time to meet their match to be a problem (only three thought it was). Four indicated in the questionnaire that this wait had no impact on their motivation while for the remainder, their comments varied, from it having a positive to a negative impact. The following typifies the views expressed by volunteer mentors:

I feel I waited quite a long time after the training before I got matched. And I started to lose confidence in myself and panic a wee bit about how am I going to remember all this. And I accept that people tell you that it won't prepare you for everything that is going to happen but I think I prefer, would have been a bit more comfortable in myself if I had been matched quite soon after the course finished (volunteer mentor)

The motivation was still there for me, but I was fed up. I wanted it done yesterday. I have got all this training, I have got all this knowledge. I am waiting to put it in to practice, where's the young person. (volunteer mentor)

The length of time it took to match with a young person was too long. This was quite deflating and some of my enthusiasm had gone. I spoke to a few of the other mentors and they shared my feelings. Started to question why I was doing this and had to think back. (volunteer mentor)

I think the time is really quite irrelevant. We were well prepared that it wasn't just going to be an overnight thing, oh right we have a person for you to mentor now. (volunteer mentor)

…the longer I waited, the less motivated I became. (volunteer mentor)

In addition, the majority (80%) indicated that they were kept well informed through this process.

Almost two thirds of volunteers were female and one third male. More detailed information was not made available from all the projects. The average age of mentors for whom we do have information was 36, ranging from 25 to 57 years of age. We only have employment status for 18 of the mentors. Of these, just over one half (10) were employed; 4 were students; 3 were unemployed and one was a houseparent. Almost three fifths of the 47 mentors who provided this information had prior experience of working with young people (which does not include experience and knowledge of young people that is gained from family).

Several themes emerged as mentors' motivation for volunteering. They were asked on their application forms what brought them to register an interest in mentoring young care leavers and what they hoped to get out of it. The 42 who provided this information indicated at least one of 5 main themes:

- that it would be satisfying or rewarding;
- to make a difference;
- career/work opportunities;
- they had the skills/experience to help;
- and to learn or gain experience.

For me I wanted to put something back, by and large. I am quite old and really have done nothing but take out of society to a great extent, you know. So I really wanted to go back and say… I have had a lot of this. (volunteer mentor)

I had in my mind that I wanted, maybe more selfish than some of us, that I wanted to shift my personal perspective which I felt was too routine, too stuck in my age, my life experience. So I wanted something that I felt was a different perspective. (volunteer mentor)

I saw it as a means to an end. It was a way to get my foot in the door and seeing what was there and getting some experience, a bit of training. (volunteer mentor)

I have always been helping people throughout my life, not in any project or anything. But I have been looking to do something like this for a while… I saw the mentoring advert in the paper and I though that is exactly what I want to do, work with them on a one-to-one voluntary basis and I just took it from there. (volunteer mentor)

These various themes were picked up by professionals involved in the projects.

[The mentors] turned out to be very nice people, very committed, very enthusiastic. Not all of them are doing it for some kind of employment gain; a couple are. But they really are committed...(project co-ordinator)

Recruitment of young people

The recruitment of young people was more specific to each project, given the particular target group of young people, and did not formally begin until after the volunteers were recruited; that is, they had completed their training and formal interview. This accounts for the time lapse between volunteers being recruited and meeting their match but also means a much shorter period of time between the young people being recruited and meeting their mentor.

Table 3 gives the average length of time between recruitment and meeting the mentor for three projects which were able to provide this information.

It shows this to be much shorter for them than their mentors, particularly so in Drummondshire where young people had to wait on average less than a month. This is unsurprising in light of the fact that when young people were recruited the volunteer mentors were already in place.

Table 3: Turnaround time for mentees

Project	No.	On average(weeks)	Ranging from (weeks)
Glenshire (1st round)	9	6	1 to 9
Wallaceshire	9	7	3 to 11
Glenshire (2nd round)	3	4	4 to 6
Drummondshire	10	3	1 to 5

N = 31

The recruitment process across the different projects again identified similar numbers of young people:

Glenshire 1st round - 13 mentees (one left before meeting their matched mentor, one left after meeting their match);

Glenshire 2nd round – 5 mentees;

Wallaceshire – 14 mentees (four young people withdrew before meeting);

Drummondshire – 13 mentees (one withdrew and 2 were put on a waiting list);
Voluntary agency – 9 mentees;

Bruce City – 7 mentees initially and 1 more at a later date

There was an equal gender representation of young people who participated in the projects. Due to the different groups of young people each project targeted the age range differed. We have this information for all young people of three projects and from this we can see that Glenshire targeted a wider age range (16-23) than Wallaceshire and Drummondshire who targeted a younger age group (15-18 and 15-17 respectively). The partial information received in respect to Voluntary Agency showed that a younger age group was involved, including two ten year olds. Over all projects, the average age was 16, ranging from 10 to 23 years of age.

An important aspect of the recruitment process concerned the relationship between the project and the staff who may be introducing the concept of mentoring to the young people. In Glenshire, for example, there was a clear and defined relationship between the Throughcare workers who would link with the young people and the project. This facilitated the process of recruitment.

[Throughcare Section] approached the ones that they thought would be most likely to accept the scheme. They were asked to fill in a registration form which asked them about what they hoped to get out of having a mentor... so it wasn't difficult to target young people for them. (project co-ordinator)

Through the Throughcare project. I was there for some time and was told that mentoring was available and would I give it a shot and see how it went...They just told me what

kind of things you would be doing – have a look at my goals. What I'd be aiming for, what time and how long you would be looking to be doing it. (young person)

In other projects, difficulties were encountered in the recruitment process which related to a lack of 'ownership' of the mentoring projects. While principally this related to residential child care, it could also involve other services.

With what we know about Throughcare and Aftercare...In theory that was the best approach, not in practice – they changed address, in chaos. (project co-ordinator)

In relation to residential care, a number of frustrations were experienced. Requests for a 'reference' on young people who had shown an earlier interest in mentoring from their key worker were often not followed up, thereby delaying the process of beginning any match. On a number of occasions where the references arrived, the overall tone was one characterised by disapproval and negativity; one worker described the worst references as being 'libellous' towards the young people. There seemed to be little recognition of the potential benefit which might accrue from a mentoring relationship and, in most cases, little or no understanding of the anxieties which it might prompt in young people. In one project, this was described as follows:

... what was wrong was that we really didn't have a time, it was really ad hoc – one, then another,

then another, then one disappeared, then another. It was very bitty. What should have come first was a better education for the [residential care] staff. Because the staff didn't really know what we were about, were less inclined to fill in the forms. It took ages, lost interest. We have to educate, give the [residential] staff a bit of knowledge about what we are about, and then go on to recruit the mentees. (project manager)

On their application form, young people were asked to indicate areas (from a choice of ten) they might want a mentor to encourage or support them. This information was provided by three of the projects and is detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Areas for encouragement or support

Areas	Glen (1)	Glen (2)	Drum	Wallace	Total
Hobbies and interests	9	4	11	13	37
Communicating with other people	4	3	2	6	15
Making decisions	4	2	4	8	18
Feeling good about yourself	7	3	2	7	19
Setting goals for yourself that you can succeed in	8	4	2	7	21
Independent living skills	2	1	5	8	16
Getting on with people you care about	2	1	2	7	12
School or College	4	1	4	8	17
Being happier where you are living	2	1	2	4	9
Something else that hasn't been mentioned	4	2	1	0	7
Total number of young people	10	4	13	14	41

N = 41

It can be seen that most young people have identified hobbies and interests, followed by setting goals that you can succeed in, feeling good about yourself and making decisions. The two young people interviewed addressed a range of reasons for becoming involved in the mentoring project.

I think it was just that I didn't have much confidence at that time and I liked my own space and didn't like meeting new people. So every person I encountered that I didn't know, if I was out of my social circle, I felt nervous and unconfident... Anything to get out of the hostel, there is nothing worse, so that is how it started off. (young person)

Getting out and getting more courage to socialise more, and getting the courage to feel good about myself and start doing stuff. (young person)

On the whole, professionals felt that the young people were also committed and clear about what they wanted from mentoring.

[The young people] have all been very easy to get on with and very enthusiastic about the project. They knew what they were looking for, they knew who they wanted to meet with and who they didn't which was very helpful. (project co-ordinator)

Although they also warned that this commitment may not last.

Usually they were quite up for it to start with. Then things change and that's when it breaks down... It gave

them another outlet, allowed them to see others with similar hobbies, outlook on life. Allowed them out of the unit, it was like an uncle, not home, not unit staff... (project co-ordinator)

The training process

Volunteer training

Training for volunteers occurred after their informal interview and consisted of five sessions. This process, to evidence learning and development in relation to key competencies, required mentors to complete a personal audit at both the beginning and end of training and to keep a learning diary for the duration of training. The key areas in the personal audit centred on theory, skills, self awareness and practicalities, with the addition of four questions at the end of the second audit. From information from both personal audits of 18 of the volunteers relating to the first three key areas, we observed that, on the whole, understanding and confidence increased after training.

Volunteers were also asked to rate on a scale of one to five their satisfaction with each training day. With 100% representing everyone giving each day the highest rating, each project rated the training sessions very highly (Glenshire, 98% & 99%; Voluntary Agency 99%; Wallaceshire 96%; Drummondshire, 92%; Bruce City, 89%) giving an overall average rating of 95%.

In light of this it is perhaps unsurprising that the training sessions were seen as a highlight and talked about favourably by volunteers at the residential weekend and rated highly by the majority in the questionnaire.

Training was really good, especially the last few weeks when we did the case studies... The role plays were interesting, especially playing the part of either mentor or the pupil, helped you experience it from both situations. Also took on board the feedback from the training. The fact that each situation is individual and is not written in stone, the right or wrong way. It felt good that you could adapt each situation. Everyone was given the opportunity to make comments and share best practices, this was very useful (volunteer mentor).

..the training was really exemplary, it was the highest standard and I think that encouraged people (volunteer mentor).

I found the training course very useful, in actual fact even for using in my home life (volunteer mentor).

The majority of these volunteers felt that the training was relevant to mentoring. There was a sense that everyone viewed it positively, that it was something that they actually looked forward to and that it did prepare them for the practice of mentoring.

I felt really well prepared when I went into it. It was extraordinary for me, the way so much that I had learnt on the training started to just open up like a pack of cards, everything just came out as if they were handing it saying this is your next..., and actually it was quite alarming how relationships formed in the way that we had been trained to expect it. It very much ran to the formula for me (volunteer mentor).

Professionals involved in the project also considered that the training had been of an extremely high quality.

The training was extremely positive, the mentors got a lot out of it, I personally got a lot out of it (service manager)

Volunteers were also required to undertake a formal interview and once both volunteers and young people had completed the formal recruitment process they were then matched and introductory meetings were arranged.

Young people training

There was no formal training programme for the young people and yet this, in a sense, was a crucial part of the process.

... a lot of young people are not comfortable leaving their comfort zone. Getting a sense of what they are interested in is difficult... getting them to talk. (project co-ordinator)

Different projects addressed it in different ways. For example, young people were asked to attend an induction session where the co-ordinator advised them of what the mentoring relationship would involve and issues such as health and safety were discussed. In one project, however, the formal process for young people had to be cut because of time constraints from four meetings to one.

... everything had to be rushed, so what I was finding was I was putting four steps into one. I was having to do initial meetings, inductions,

selection process and matching all in one, which I found worked. It did work out OK because by that point they had already been sold the idea. It wasn't too hard for me, just technically it wasn't what had been anticipated. (project co-ordinator)

In another project there was a sense that preparation had not been done in a clear, planned way. Comparing it to the training for the mentors, an involved professional stated:

… I think something had to be done for the mentees, who had a very ad hoc fun day… very last minute, quick fix fun day. Could have been done better, more variety, actually engaging them to do activities and then introducing the mentoring. (service manager)

While the fact that the recruitment and induction of young people would be left to the local projects was a planned approach by the Fostering Network, the comparison with the process for mentors, suggests that a more formalized programme for mentees could be considered.

The matching process

In general, mentors and mentees were matched by the co-ordinator. This was performed on the basis of information in registration forms and from the co-ordinators' knowledge of both mentors and young people. Once matched, an introductory meeting would take place which the co-ordinator would also normally attend, although in some cases, again because of pressure of time, the meeting might be facilitated by another professional (who would have taken part in a briefing in advance).

The recruitment process in the different projects, taking account of withdrawals, resulted in the following number of mentoring relationships:

Glenshire 1st round – 10 mentoring pairs
Glenshire 2nd round – 5 mentoring pairs
Wallaceshire – 9 mentoring pairs
Drummondshire – 10 mentoring pairs
Voluntary Agency – 9 mentoring pairs
Bruce City – 7 mentoring pairs

We have touched upon the fact that the wait to meet their match was considerably longer for volunteers than it was for the young people. However, the questionnaire completed by the residential weekend volunteers indicated that they did not have any issues with the matching process. The majority (14 out of 15) found the pre-matching interview useful and felt that were kept well informed through this process (12 out of 15). They also felt that the match between themselves and the young person was good (14) and that that they received sufficient information about their young person (14).

Both young people and volunteers were able to indicate the age and gender of the partner they would like. From the information gathered from the 15 mentors of one project, only two specified an age range and three a gender. The majority had no preference. Of the 46 young people for whom we have this information almost three quarters had no preference in terms of gender. Conversely, 60 per cent of

young people did have a preference with regards to age with half of them wanting a volunteer under 25 years of age.

One mentor – mentee pair talked about their first meeting:

> Mentee: *Yeah, it was good... we got along straight away, I think I was quite shy at first*

> Mentor: *You need a number of visits to get to know each other a bit better because you don't know anything about each other from that first meeting. Obviously, the reliability and trust but after the first meeting that was fine and you build it from there.*

The mentoring process
Mentoring contract and review meetings

The mentoring relationship process initially involves negotiating a mentoring contract. This is agreed between the mentor and the young person and is to be completed after four meetings. Ideally, therefore, this will have been completed within four weeks of meeting. The review meetings are held quarterly by the co-ordinator and involve both the mentor and the young person in order to review progress and to plan ahead. The first review meeting is held within three months of meeting and if the mentoring contract is not complete by this time it is done so then.

According to the data received, this timetable has not been met in any of the projects. This information is based from the date of the first meeting to the date we received the data and for comparative purposes we focused on the first mentoring contract and review meeting only.

In Glenshire's first recruitment round, just under half mentoring agreements were completed within one month of meeting with the remaining ranging from six to 47 weeks into the relationship. The majority did have a review meeting within three months of meeting. From information pertaining to two pairs from their second recruitment round this timetable has not been reached either. In Drummondshire, of the eight ongoing relationships, three have had a mentoring contract (seven, nine and ten weeks after first meeting), five have not (whose duration ranges from 15 to 22 weeks) and none have had a review meeting. None of the pairs in Wallaceshire have had a mentoring agreement or review meeting. From the information we could gather on three ongoing pairs, they have been meeting for, approximately, twelve, twenty and thirty five weeks. Of Bruce City's seven relationships one has had a mentoring agreement (ongoing for 24 weeks) and none a review meeting. Other mentoring relationships had been meeting for approximately five, six, fourteen, fifteen and seventeen weeks. In Voluntary Agency, where the length of relationships range from 14 to 29 weeks, none have had a mentoring agreement or review meeting.

Mentors in Glenshire expressed some dissatisfaction about the process of the contract.

> *The contract brought an awkwardness into it for me. It was a chore is a good way to sum it up (Glenshire mentor)*

We can appreciate that this may be due to the nature of the relationships, it may have been some time before they had four meetings which in turn impacts on the review meetings. Alternatively, the relationships may not have evolved far enough to reach these stages and this was picked up by involved professionals.

Goals

In line with the ethos of mentoring, the initial mentoring contract required each pair to specify the objectives of their relationship; we can only comment on those from one of the projects. In Glenshire, two pairs did not have a mentoring contract and one did not have a goal when theirs was first completed. For the remaining seven, their goals varied. For some this was, or included, fitness, for some a sporting activity. Others had a specific goal whether it be going to college, building a model boat or learning the highway code, while socialising was an objective for one.

> Mentee: *It feels different to what it did in the beginning because there were so many goals I was aiming for but now things have changed and I have changed a lot. I don't really know what goals I could be aiming for now.*

> Mentor: *Life has got in the way of what goals we had set so we have just had to change, Fiona's life has just had to change... we are still doing the same things but probably more supportive.*

Another pair of mentor and mentee described their goals as follows:

> Mentee: *... My confidence at that time was terrible and I couldn't get out of the house just to go and buy a pint of milk or anything.*

> Mentor: *You didn't like going out of the house a lot in the beginning so we arranged to meet at your house most of the time.*

> Mentee: (describing the formal 'goals contract' part after a few meetings) *It was basically what achievements and goals we wanted to do for the next couple of months ... all the meetings have been successful.*

> Mentor: *Your main goal at the beginning was to do your driving...*

> Mentee: *It was confidence building actually and trying to socialise and meet out with other people and then driving lessons*

Meetings

The frequency and duration of meetings was agreed by both volunteer and young person and stipulated in the mentoring agreement. The importance of meeting, to keep the momentum going, is recognised. Based on the information from four of the projects (although not in relation to all meetings) the percentage of arranged meetings which took place differed. Overall, in Wallaceshire 50% of arranged meetings took place, in Bruce City 65%, in Drummondshire 75% and in Glenshire 76%. From information taken from the two projects which had the lowest take up, the most common reason for a meeting not taking place was the young person not showing up.

Support and supervision

Supervision of the relationship was undertaken through review meetings, mentor support group meetings and contact from the co-ordinator. While contact from the co-ordinator differed across the projects, the volunteers at the residential weekend indicated that they felt well supported in both the early stages of establishing their relationship and during mentoring.

> *I knew support was available at all times if I needed it.*

> *Co-ordinator could not have done any more. Very supportive.*

> *The phone support has been there and has been very good. [Co-ordinator] has always been there for me. Support for everybody has been very good. I think it's good that if you have a problem that you can phone in. The supervision was good too. The first support group was very structured but the last few changed, rather than coming into a set timetable it became more natural. It was good to share our experiences during the group. (Glenshire mentor)*

Support for mentees was less structured within the projects:

> *No formal process. Talk to them on and off – maybe every 2 weeks – on an informal basis. Talk to them whenever we're arranging meetings. (project co-ordinator)*

There was an expectation that the young people's key worker or social worker would monitor and support them.

A Co-ordinator's Perspective on Mentoring Relationships

An interview was conducted to gain the Glenshire mentoring co-ordinator's perspective on the mentoring relationships in October 2004. Questions centred on reasons behind matching them, the strengths, weaknesses and progress of the relationship, benefits of the service to the young people and, if the relationship has stopped, why.

The matching of this group of mentors and young people was undertaken by the Glenshire Throughcare Manager before the co-ordinator assumed her post. However, she was able to comment on the reasons behind matching each pair and did confirm that four pairs have finished and that two have not met for some time (one of which she assumed has ceased but had not had confirmation).

In most cases, there was more than one reason for matching mentor and mentee. The majority, though, were matched on the basis of gender(mostly that they were the same). Almost half (4) were matched on the basis of their personalities, with two being matched because they shared the same interest (horse riding and model boat building). Two were matched due to particular attributes that the mentor had that would be of particular benefit to the young person. Other reasons given for matching individual pairs were: locality, interests, being of similar age, and both having a previous match and were looking for someone new. At the end of her interview the co-ordinator did add that:

> *The main reasons why the pairs were matched apart from personality wise was due to*

paperwork so we had a mentoring form which the mentors filled out and the young person filled out their own information sheet…

There were two factors that were identified as a strength in most of the mentoring relationships: meeting regularly (8) and having similar personality traits (7). Other factors which were identified included getting on well (5), communicating well (3), having a common interest (2) and similar interests (1).

Although the co-ordinator was able to identify potential difficulties in each relationship, for two they were classed as minor ones. In the majority of cases, a particular aspect relating to the young person was identified as a potential difficulty (i.e. forgetting or not attending meetings, their lifestyle, losing motivation or not being committed); for a few it was an aspect relating to the mentor (i.e. changing job or illness). Both having external problems and commitments which impeded meeting was also identified as a possible difficulty as was communication and having a gap.

For all four pairs that left the project, their relationship started out well and for various reasons fell away. Of the remaining pairs, two were going extremely well, two have not met for some time (with the co-ordinator assuming that one had ended) and one started really well, had a huge gap and has since re-started. The relationship of the remaining pair is different. The young person came from the disabilities team and his condition made it difficult for the mentor to engage with him.

The co-ordinator advised that they are always progressing, had taken to each other and had moved forward since they started. She did advise that this is more of a befriending role, as possibly is one other.

The co-ordinator confirmed that four pairs had officially left the project. For two this was due to similar reasons, either the momentum being broken and there being no pattern or that the pattern was broken. The young person's lack of commitment and a lack of meetings were seen to contribute to the demise of the third and not having a set goal and outside factors dictating the young person's life to the fourth.

Benefits of the mentoring service to the young people vary individually. All except one were deemed to have benefited from it in some way (whether it be from their life improving, their confidence increasing, or the mentor being a good influence and support).

Across the Projects.

In April 2005, the number of ongoing mentoring relationships was as follows. Glenshire had eight mentoring relationships ongoing, three from the first round and five from the second; Wallaceshire had four; Drummondshire had eight; Bruce City had seven; and Voluntary Agency had five ongoing but with four mentors matched, or due to be matched with another young person.

Project staff and mentors identified a range of benefits from the mentoring relationships.

The mentors have done really well, very rarely let the young people down

For the young people, even those who don't have a goal, they are sticking with their mentors. They're pleased with the company, someone outwith social work, individual to them.

It's extremely complex and difficult. It was for the majority a very positive experience. We all have a lot to learn about the experience of mentoring. Comments from the young people and mentors is that it's something both get something from, a win-win situation. If the timing isn't right, it probably won't work. (project Advisory Group member)

[The mentors] meet the young person's needs and agenda, and at the young person's pace. It's needs led. A lot of young people struggle, even just to socialise, and it meets the needs of young people... (project Advisory Group member)

[The mentees] They wouldn't be coming if they're not getting something from it. No-one's making them go. Initially, it's the relationship, getting on with the mentors, as it progresses it gets closer to goals (project co-ordinator)

One mentor – mentee pair described the benefits as follows:

Mentor: Confidence wise, you are doing a lot more stuff on your own... You take the initiative on things more when you have things to sort out, whereas before things got on top of you.

Mentee: It has made me realise that everyone is different, and building up my confidence has helped me a lot... If I set my mind to do something I can. Before I met [mentor] I was too shy but now that I have met [mentor], I have opened myself up more. I have woken up and have more confidence to speak up for myself.

Mentor: A lot of your lack of confidence comes from your previous problems though. There were certain places that she wouldn't go because of people from the past. That's not easy but if you are with someone, it is easier to go and do things. And it has given her the confidence to go out more.

Mentee: It's been really good, the mentoring. I am going out a lot more now and the mentoring has helped me to get out and about. I am doing things that I never thought I could do.

5   Implications and Conclusions

Throughout the report a number of challenges to effective implementation and management of these diverse schemes have been noted and some of the implications discussed. The key findings, together with some broad conclusions, are drawn out here.

Organisational Context

The 'lead-in' and 'start-up' times to develop the projects often took longer than was anticipated. The enthusiasm of key staff to participate in, and to actively develop, new ways of enhancing support to young people was not always matched by their organisations' capacity to identify funding and resources and to negotiate roles and responsibilities within tight timescales. No doubt different factors contributed to this, but so too the swift pace of change in children and young people's services generally during this time, as well as other pressures on staff and resources. This being said, there was also innovation and creativity in identifying resources to support the projects.

It's an obvious that 'ownership' of any project is vital to its success but the way in which this is perceived, is achieved and the importance accorded to each of the various stakeholders in any endeavour is not quite so straightforward. In some projects, funding, staffing and the management of both referrals to and support for matches rested within one agency or department. It is clear that a unified sense of purpose, ownership and commitment has helped overcome many of the problems faced by the projects.

Miller (1998), in the context of school mentoring, highlights the importance of the commitment of senior management, as well as the support of the whole staff. In other projects, cross-agency cooperation was strong. In one project, ownership of the mentoring project was more problematic and difficulties with social work staff engaging at both management and individual level has meant that a great deal of time has been taken in the building of relationships between departments within one organisation. Hall (2003) stressed that 'mentoring needs to be properly integrated into its organisational context and establish appropriate links with other services and opportunities' (Hall, 2003, p. 20)

'Mentoring' is an unfamiliar idea to many young people and while many, with appropriate guidance and support accepted the opportunity with enthusiasm, others held negative views and were not helped by staff working with them to understand the potential. Indeed, it is clear that many carers and workers entertained similar questions or doubts. Together these proved to be an obstacle to the recruitment of young people in some projects. The importance of the personal support of young people by staff working directly with them is crucial. Ongoing support is also essential in sustaining mentoring relationships at times of crisis. In particular, the attitude of residential managers and staff, in some cases, appeared to give the message that mentoring had little to offer. Miller (1998) states that the recognition of the purpose of mentoring by staff helps to reinforce its importance. The focus of

Fostering Network on developing the recruitment, training and support systems for mentors has perhaps been at the expense of similar emphasis on the young people. This assumes that young people can depend on support from other professionals and/or carers to help them make informed decisions about whether it is relevant for them; if so, what particular use can be made of any relationship and, perhaps most important of all, help them manage the always difficult process of embarking on a new relationship with a complete stranger. Ridley (2003), in her evaluation of a mentoring project for care leavers, recommended that consideration should be given to new or additional ways to promote the benefits of mentoring to young people leaving care (Ridley, 2003, p. 24). Pawson (2004b) also states:

> *Do not expect quick results from mentoring programmes for disaffected youth. They can produce good results but the process is a long and halting one, and their potential to succeed with the most antagonistic 'hard cases' is likely to be limited. (Pawson, 2004b, p. 4)*

Target Group

While both 'failures' and 'successes' in terms of mentoring relationships have to be a matter of getting the right match in terms of interests and personalities, a consistent issue is that of focusing mentoring opportunities on the most disadvantaged children and young people. The factors which seem to have most impact on successful relationships are: age and 'maturity'; care settings; and the range of difficulties which young

people are experiencing and chaotic lifestyles. Interestingly, where mentoring was focused on a clear transition period, it seemed to offer most to young people.

Project Staff

The support of Fostering Network was rated highly across the projects and the training provided was seen as a crucial factor in supporting mentors. Over the period of the pilots, the 'standard' formula for calculating the time commitment required to fully support and administer the projects was felt to be significantly under-estimated. In most cases, mentoring project staff were hard pressed to manage the competing demands on their time and maintaining their idealism and enthusiasm was often at the price of extending working hours far beyond the budgeted time available. Despite earlier agreements about the need for project coordinators to collate extensive information on mentors, young people referred, and ongoing recording of matches, in practice this happened rarely as other pressures simply to maintain a service took precedence. The Scottish Mentoring Network (2005) recommends that

> *A maximum of between fifteen and twenty matches should be assigned to any one project worker/Co-ordinator. This needs to be used as a benchmark (Scottish Mentoring Network, 2005)*

The complexity of the task also needs to be highlighted. The project co-ordinators were supervising mentors who were involved in relationships with

young people at extremely difficult points in their lives. It is essential, therefore, that such staff have the necessary skills and experience and the support to undertake this difficult role.

Mentoring: The Model

Two major lessons emerge for the model of mentoring. In most cases, where relationships have endured for any period of time, it is rare that these have complied with any 'purist' notion of mentoring, with its focus on ends and goals defined clearly by the young person being established, supported and followed through rigorously to a more or less pre-determined conclusion. In practice, many young people have found it difficult to clearly articulate a meaningful goal, but most have welcomed the interest and support of the mentor meeting with them on a regular basis. This has been found in other research. Philip, Shucksmith and King (2003), for example, write:

> *... the establishment of mentoring relationships was not always straightforward. It took time and considerable effort by both partners and progress was often uneven. Some young people valued the process of developing the relationship as much if not more than the outcomes. It was evident too that many relationships were fragile and easily undermined... (Philip, Shucksmith and King, 2003, p. 23)*

Even where goals were established at a fairly early stage, then, the changing life circumstances of the young people have led to shifts and change. What was

important in both of these situations was the unequivocal, non-judgemental, non-professional, support and friendship which they were offered; for some young people this was a powerfully affirmative experience of modelling positive ways of living and behaving as an adult.

For some mentees this concern with the 'means' rather than the 'ends' of mentoring persisted throughout the relationship with an understanding developing, sometimes in a tacit way, that this was in every way but in name, a befriending relationship. In other cases, however, while 'befriending' was the most apparent and immediate benefit to mentees, the relationship was able to develop into something more akin to mentoring over time, with a developing focus on its being deliberately used to develop the normal range of targets and goals.

> *It is often assumed that mentoring will proceed steadily through a series of stages, before coming to focus on the needs of the young people and on devising strategies to mitigate problems and overcome difficulties. Such thinking over-simplifies the nature of mentoring and tends to overstate the centrality of goal-oriented, instrumental activities in such work. (Shiner et al 2004b, p. 2)*

The central question to emerge from the development of the schemes is whether this diversity of relationships, both at the outset and then latterly, represents an unacceptable dilution of a core benefit of mentoring or whether these organic and flexible arrangements represent the development of a different

method of providing combined advantages. It seems that meeting the needs of severely disadvantaged young people requires a degree of flexibility and fluidity in relationships with mentors where something closer to befriending may be the only, or certainly initial, outcome. Operate the service as a 'befriending' service and that is all you can expect to achieve. Operate as a mentoring service, though, with flexibility built into everyone's expectations from the outset, and, arguably you can attain the benefits of mentoring for some young people, at some stage in their contact with the service. Pawson (2004b), in summarizing his explanatory review of mentoring relationships writes:

> *Do not underestimate the usefulness of volunteer or other 'non-professional' mentors who can do little more than befriend their mentees. While they cannot deliver higher grade functions such as direction-setting, coaching and advocacy, they help to create the essential ground conditions for further improvement. (Pawson, 2004b, p. 4)*

Further, Scottish Mentoring Network, in putting forward a model of mentoring, states:

> *Agencies need to consider developing a flexible model of mentoring and befriending for this particular group of vulnerable young people to allow them to access a range of interventions within one project (Scottish Mentoring Network, 2005).*

'Selling' the idea of mentoring is another challenge which has emerged for each of the projects, no matter how well integrated into services for young people and no matter how well connected with potential mentees the project is. The development of a short video in 2004, highlighting mentoring across Britain but particularly in Glenshire, played a useful part in helping encourage and train mentors.

It is clear that the development and sustaining of such new projects designed for the needs of disadvantaged young people requires adequate staff resources so that the critical level of knowledge, contacts and networking can be undertaken. Sufficient time is also needed to support the development of such projects.

Even the longest established projects have faced some level of difficulty in sustaining relationships with the most disadvantaged young people and inevitably all of them have had to grapple with the central question whether some degree of toleration of less goal-oriented matches is acceptable to the schemes and to mentors. Arguably, while none of this is entirely novel, it was always a cardinal principle that each scheme develop its own approach to creating a scheme which represented and best reflected the characteristics of its area and stakeholder characteristics. While Fostering Network has been of enormous importance to all schemes, especially project staff and mentors, and as much transferability of learning has been developed across projects as possible, it was imperative each project remained local and ultimately self-sustaining.

If the final number of young people offered a mentoring opportunity has been fewer than originally hoped, many key lessons about developing another, potentially valuable source of support to some of Scotland's most vulnerable people have been learned. In particular this pilot project has demonstrated some of the realities of reaching out successfully to the most disadvantaged group of young people with experience of care.

I think so far, in the past year and a half, it's been successful, when you see the benefits to the young people. I think you need to maintain the project for a longer time, to see the longer benefits; three or four years. (project co-ordinator)

Mentee: Obviously we wouldn't stop seeing each other because I would just die. Even if I go on holiday for 2 weeks,

I am like 'I miss Angela'. It has become like a routine to see Angela. She is sort of like a fairy godmother, that you can click your finger and she is there. You can tell all your problems to her, it is great.

Mentor: I used to go away in the beginning and hope that he would be ok. Till I would see him the next week, you always had that worry about him. But now I go away knowing that he is going to be fine... Now I know that he is going to be fine and he is going to survive.

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