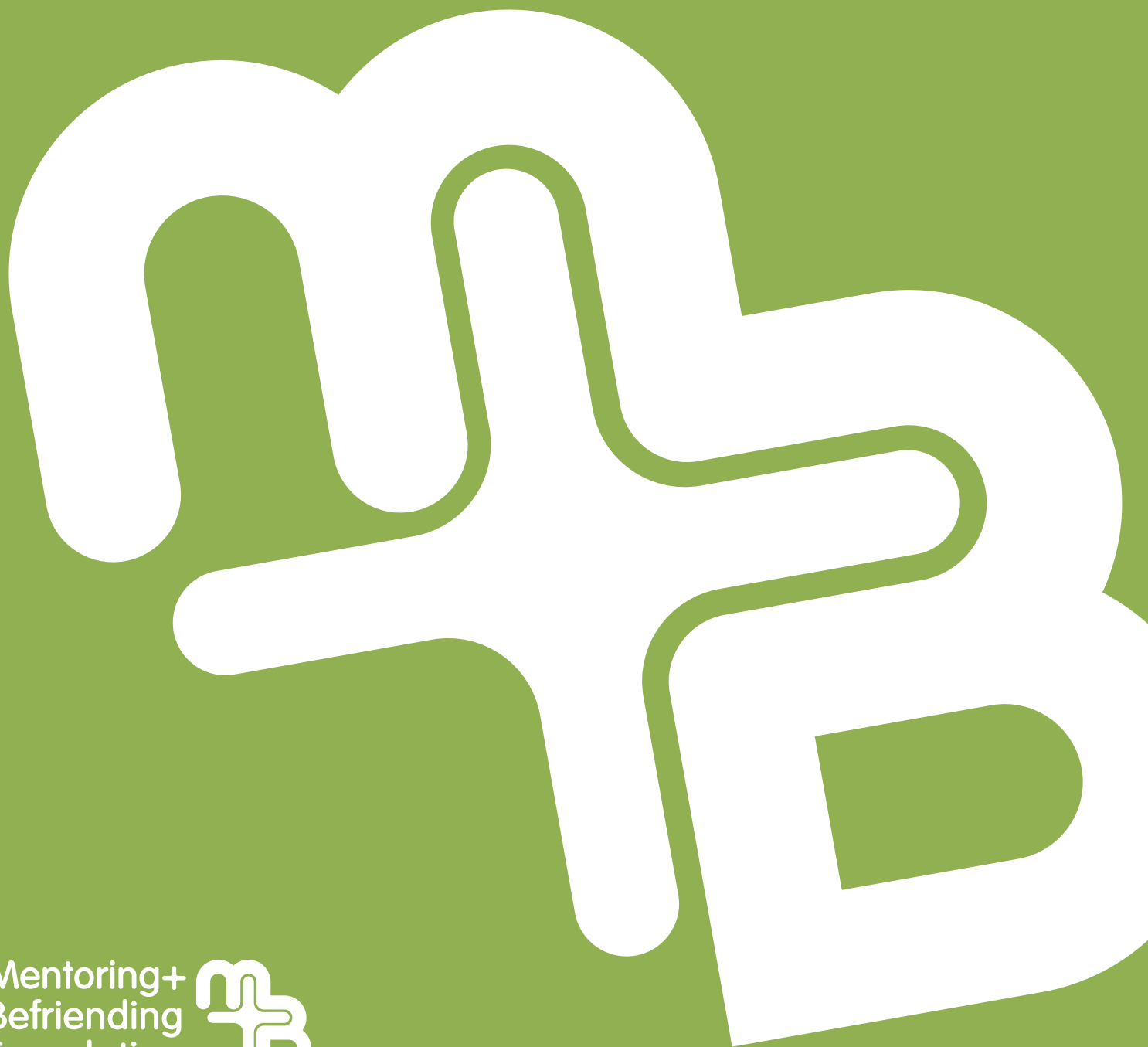


Peer Mentoring in Schools

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A review of the evidence base of the
benefits of peer mentoring in schools
including findings from the MBF Outcomes
Measurement Programme



The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) is a national charity that works to support, develop and grow mentoring and befriending programmes throughout England. We do this by providing a source of expert guidance, inspiring excellence and creating a force for change.

Our vision is of a society where mentoring and befriending can empower all people to reach their full potential.

Our mission is to support the expansion of quality mentoring and befriending provision across all sectors.

We are committed to taking a proactive approach and learning from the many examples of effective practice that have been developed. Our overriding aspiration is to build and extend best practice to ensure high quality mentoring and befriending services throughout the UK.

With the support of the Department for Education¹ we have taken a lead in piloting peer mentoring within schools. This has included the Peer Mentoring Pilot Programme 2001-2004 (run by the National Mentoring Network); a further national Peer Mentoring Pilot 2006-2008, an Anti-bullying Peer Mentoring Pilot 2008-2010 and the current Outcomes Measurement Pilot 2009-2011. These initiatives have led to the development of evaluation documents, training, guidance manuals and other materials.

How MBF can help you

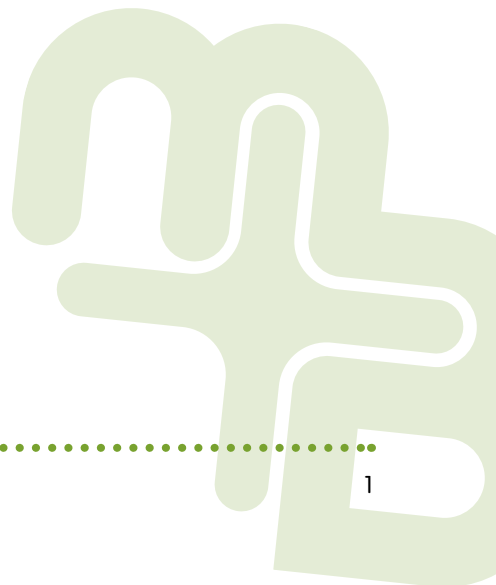
We hope you find this peer mentoring evidence base review interesting and informative. If you need any more information, help or guidance, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We provide a range of services to encourage the growth and development of peer mentoring.

Some of our main services for peer mentoring schemes include:

- **Approved Provider Standard:** the national benchmark for safe and effective practice in peer mentoring
- **Training:** we run a specialist two-tiered training programme specifically for people with or without peer mentoring experience
- **Bespoke training and consultancy:** we have experienced trainers who can tailor training to your specific needs and deliver it in-house
- **Resources:** we have an extensive bank of training packs, toolkits, publications, reports, research, information sheets, DVDs and so on... all available on our website

For more information about any of the above please visit our website or contact us:

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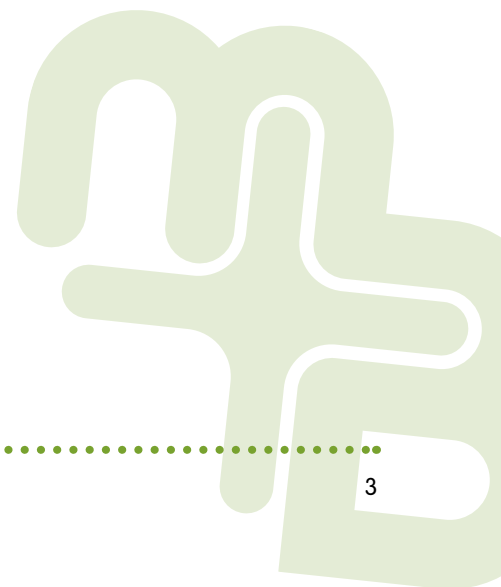
¹Previously the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Children, Schools and Families

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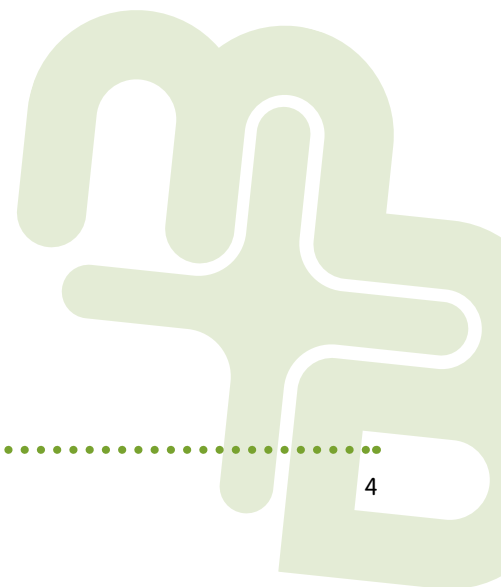
Introduction

Over the past 20 years, there has been a major growth in peer mentoring and support within schools in the UK. This has been supported through the work of many organisations including: ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHiPs); the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF); Beatbullying and many local schools. As MBF takes over the work of CHiPs from the NSPCC, research has been carried out to review the success of peer mentoring and the outcomes which peer mentors and mentees have achieved within schools throughout England. The approach of this research has been twofold. Firstly, a research review has been carried out into existing UK and US based research on school based peer mentoring. These findings have been supplemented by primary data from MBF's outcomes measurement pilot that has been running with schools to measure and collate outcomes from a range of peer mentoring projects. This pilot took place during the academic year 2009-10 and will be supplemented by case study evidence from other projects and organisations which have been providing peer mentoring in schools.



Key findings

- Peer mentoring provision within schools has experienced significant growth over the last ten years
- From the data, it is likely that over a third of all schools in England have some form of peer mentoring/peer support provision
- To date, much of the focus of peer mentoring programmes has been on reducing bullying
- The current evidential base for peer mentoring is predominantly qualitative but more recent studies are focusing on collating quantitative data relating to specific targets such as attainment and well-being
- Participants of peer mentoring programmes and school staff feel that the programmes benefit both the young people and the pupils that they mentor and are perceived to have a wider benefit for the climate of the school
- Recent pilot studies by the MBF and others have demonstrated the impact of peer mentoring in helping to reduce bullying, promoting self confidence and self esteem
- Peer mentoring programmes that are more formalised and include training, support and management of the mentors are more beneficial in terms of impact
- Peer mentoring fits well with policy initiatives such as participation, early intervention and volunteering



Peer mentoring – an overview of current provision in England

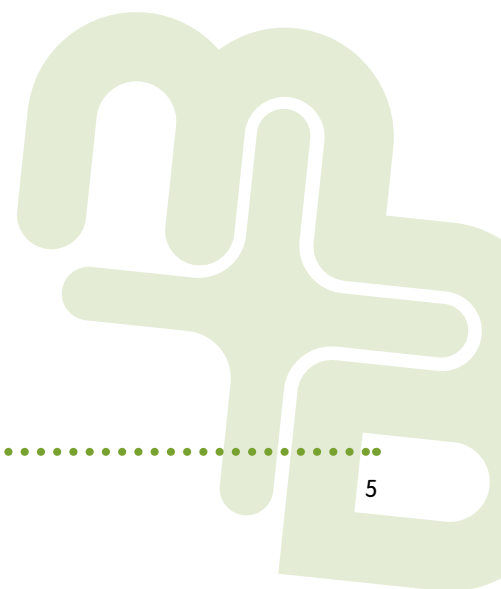
Peer mentoring programmes within schools have undergone a significant period of growth over the past 10-15 years. From the data held by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation in comparison with the DCSF statistical information (October 2007)², the existence of peer mentoring provision within schools has been reported as follows:

	Total schools in England	Contact with MBF		Number of schools contacted running peer mentoring projects		APS approved projects	
		Schools	Percentage	Schools	Percentage	Projects	Percentage
Primary schools	17,361	339	2.0%	89	26%	55	0.3%
Secondary schools	3,343	1720	51.5%	595	35%	86	2.6%
Special schools	1,078	44	4.1%	12	27%	1	0.1%

From this it can be estimated that, if each project supports 20 young people (as an average), there are at least 16,000 young people being supported by peer mentoring within English schools that we already know about.

These figures are supplemented by other research including Houlston et al (2009) who state that their 'best estimate' is of 62% of schools (secondary 68%, primary 57%) having peer support initiatives. They go on to state that: **'This population gives an indication of the current popularity of peer support initiatives and will be useful for future assessment of growth or decline in these measures in response to evolving government policy.'** Similarly, research reviewing use of the previous government's pack on bullying: **'Don't suffer in silence'** undertaken in 1996 and again in 2002 noted that: **'peer support approaches did not feature much in the first edition of the pack but did feature strongly in the second'** (Samara and Smith 2008). Samara and Smith cite Hurst (2001) and Naylor and Cowie (1999) as part of the reason for this being the dissemination of information about programmes, stating that: **'There is good evidence that these benefit peer supporters and improve school climate and anecdotal evidence that they are effective in reducing bullying'**.

This growth in popularity is also evidenced through MBF's successive pilot programme work. The 2001-04 programme ran an initial pilot with six schools which was then rolled out to 300 schools over the course of the two years. The subsequent 2006-08 pilot programme which focussed on anti-bullying included 180 schools in 29 local authorities. Many of the schools involved had little or no previous experience of peer mentoring.



² <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/TIM/m002003/index.shtml>

Research review

‘Involvement in a planned mentoring relationship has become a feature of the lives of considerable numbers of young people in the UK in recent years. It is a concept that has great appeal and anecdotal reports have indicated that the experience of mentoring can be an enjoyable and positive experience for both mentors and mentees. On the face of it, mentoring appears to be a common sense approach to the complex array of issues and difficulties that face young people.’

(Philip and Spratt, 2007)

Evaluative research into the benefits of peer mentoring within schools is still relatively limited and is mainly drawn from the US and UK. A key finding of the report’s secondary research is that there are a number of terms used for school based peer interventions. Alongside peer mentoring, these include: peer tutoring; peer support; peer listening; befriending and buddying. For the purposes of this report, the range of support initiatives that have been included in the secondary research fall within the definition of peer support provided by Houlston et al (2009): **‘Peer support involves school programmes which train and use students themselves to help others learn and develop emotionally, socially or academically. These may also be referred to as peer-counselling (or peer-listening), befriending, buddy or mentoring schemes. These schemes may be used in addition to more traditional adult-based pastoral support systems.’**

Whilst there are a number of well established UK based reports on adult mentoring interventions with young people, it has not been felt relevant to include these within this report.

US based research

In reference to the evidential base for peer mentoring, Philip and Spratt cite the work of James Coleman in the US as particularly influential. Coleman’s research into high school students was conducted in the 1960s and **‘pointed to a growing divide between the generations with young people more likely to be swayed by their peers than parents or school’** (Philip and Spratt, 2007). A further significant study is the work undertaken by Pringle et al (1990) which is summarised in a review carried out by the California Research Bureau (Powell, 1997). Powell refers to Pringle et al’s work as the most significant study of school based peer tutoring and mentoring in the nation. The study included findings from 31 grantee school districts including 10 case studies and student outcomes from 13 grantee projects and identified positive outcomes for participants.

Later research conducted by Pringle et al (1993) found that cross age tutoring and mentoring encouraged mentors and mentees to regard each other as surrogate siblings or extended family members.

‘The evaluation found peer tutoring and mentoring can positively affect academic achievement as evidenced by improvements in test scores, grade point averages and course pass rates. In addition, students showed improved social integration as evidenced by improved attendance, reduced disciplinary referrals, and improved student attitudes toward school. The most promising results were found in programmes that selected low achieving students to tutor much younger children.’

(Powell, 1997)

Research review

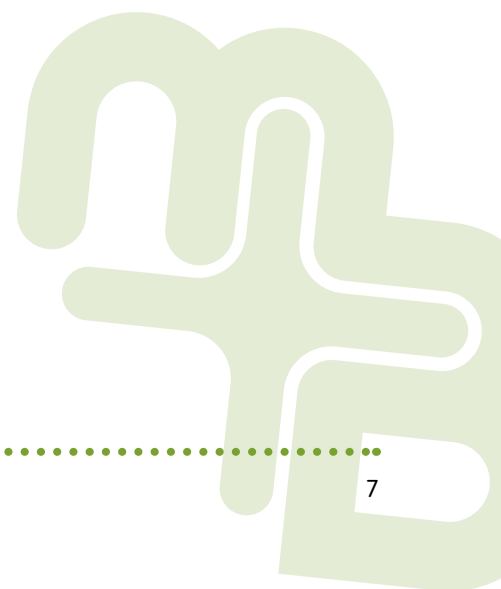
A more recent evaluative study was carried out into the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) peer mentoring scheme run in high schools in the US (Herrera et al, 2008). This study was focused on identifying the impact of mentoring by high school students and draws comparisons with the use of adult mentors. The study included 1139 young people and 71 schools. The findings from the study are mixed and only highlight two areas where 'high school Bigs' had greater success than 'adult Bigs'. Despite this, the evaluators conclude that the peer mentoring programmes are of value and emphasised that there were notable differences in outcomes between programmes, depending on how it was delivered i.e. the quality of delivery. One specific issue cited was that the programmes which offered quality training to their mentors had more successful matches.

'First, and most importantly, high school volunteers have the potential to make a substantial difference in their Littles' lives, as evidenced both in evaluations of more structured programmes and in those programmes in the current study with very strong staff support. Second, high school volunteers represent an efficient way to reach many children through school-based programmes. And although they do require more and different kinds of support than adults, they also have many unique strengths.'

(Big Brother Big Sister Evaluation)

A more positive evaluation was conducted by Stader and Gagnepain (2000) who found that peer mentoring programmes assisted with enhancing the climate within schools and brought about a decline in pupil drop-out rates.

The view of young people potentially having more credibility than adults with their peer group is referred to often in the literature on peer mentoring (Vincent et al, 2006; Pawson et al citing Frankham, 2004). Potentially of greater significance in respect of an evidential rationale for peer mentoring, are the findings in relation to the benefits derived by both mentors and mentees. Much of the research on adult mentoring with young people tends to focus on the outcomes for the young people. The key difference with peer mentoring is that, due to the developmental stage of both the mentor and mentee, the research on peer mentoring focuses on the mutuality of the relationship and the outcomes for both. The recognition of the mutuality of benefit first emerged from the research undertaken into peer mentoring and is now widely acknowledged.



Research review

UK based research

Peer Mentoring Pilot – National Mentoring Network (NMN)

The NMN Peer Mentoring Pilot Programme was conducted between 2001-04 and included data from over 300 schools and 4,000 pupils. It found that one of the ‘unexpected outcomes’ of peer mentoring was the degree to which peer mentors benefited as much, if not more than, the mentees with 53% of schools highlighting an increase in self-confidence amongst the peer mentor group (NMN, 2004). The evaluation included questionnaires, school visits, focus groups and regional evaluation meetings and concluded that:

“This programme has had a profound impact in our school. Our students’ self-esteem has been enhanced by their active involvement in a scheme that promotes independent learning and citizenship skills.”

(Head teacher, Hertfordshire)

“Feedback from projects indicates a high degree of satisfaction with peer mentoring programmes and the beneficial effect that they can have on the pupils involved directly and on the whole school environment. Peer mentoring adds an extra level to the pastoral support offered by a school; it helps to convey the message that this is a school that cares about its pupils.”

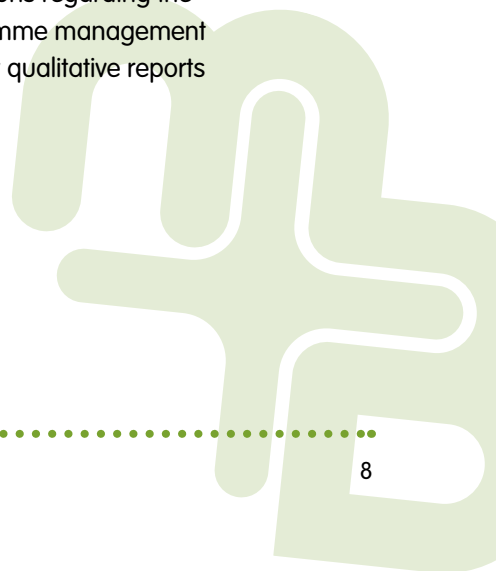
(NMN, 2004)

ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHIPs)

In the same year as the NMN reported, an evaluation of the ChildLine in Partnership with Schools Programme (CHIPs) was published. CHIPs was introduced in 1997 with the aim of raising awareness about ChildLine and developing programmes run by and for pupils to address issues such as bullying and violence (Smith and Watson, 2004). The evaluation included visits to 19 schools with interviews carried out with the various stakeholders and analysis of 834 questionnaires.

It concluded that the training and support provided to peer supporters is beneficial to those involved and that there were clear instances of individual mentees who had benefited from receiving support. However, the authors found it harder to determine clear quantitative data, mainly due to a lack of collection by schools. Smith and Watson noted that **‘an important minority of schools were able to provide some sort of statistical data relating to behaviour and the reduction in incidents’** (Smith and Watson, 2004). As a result of the findings, Smith and Watson went on to make a number of recommendations regarding the management of peer support programmes that focus on the rigour required for programme management and delivery. The findings from CHIPs were updated in a report based on predominantly qualitative reports from participating schools and CHIPs staff in 2008 (ChildLine, 2008).

Overall, 72% of pupils and 94% of staff felt it was a good idea to have the peer support service within schools.



Research review

“In terms of the effect of peer support on the school, I think ‘dramatic’ is the appropriate word. If you visit now, you just get a feeling about it. Bullying rates have been drastically reduced, our exam results are better than they were eight years ago, and attendance figures are the best we’ve ever had, up from 89% then to 95% now.”

(Deputy head, Flegg High, Norfolk)

The report doesn’t include any quantitative data other than self reported findings but reported results include reductions in bullying, improved behaviour, better atmosphere at schools, improved relations between staff and pupils, increased confidence and self-esteem for both peer supporters and those they support.

IntoUniversity programme

A further qualitative study was undertaken on the IntoUniversity programme (White et al, 2007).

IntoUniversity is an educational programme aimed at children and young people deemed to be most at risk of failing to succeed in gaining a university place. The study included eight case studies, observation of the programme and evaluation forms from 278 participants. Both the mentors and mentees reported gains from the programme. Reported benefits included skills such as communication and organisational skills. The programme is broad in its reach; including young people aged 8-18, and since its inception in 2002, has worked with over 1,500 children and young people. To date, however, there has been no longitudinal assessment as to success in relation to the overall aim of university entry.

MBF National Peer Mentoring Pilot

MBF conducted a further peer mentoring pilot in 2006-08 designed to test different models of peer mentoring. The pilot was focused on four models – attainment, behaviour, anti-bullying and transition and was independently evaluated by the University of Canterbury. The pilot had a broad reach and, by its conclusion, had worked with over 14,500 young people and 180 schools across 29 local authorities. The evaluation highlighted that over 80% of mentees and 90% of mentors felt positively about their experience. Whilst the evaluators noted that there is still a gap in the provision of quantifiable data by schools, there was some specific evidence relating to the four models of attainment, behaviour, attendance and transition (Parsons et al, 2008).

An OFSTED inspection conducted on one of the participating schools singled out the peer mentoring provision for specific praise.

“Some students benefit by hearing positive messages about performance and conduct, not from parents and teachers, but from other students whose experiences give them some wisdom and credibility. By targeting specific students with this form of intervention we have helped to drastically reduce our fixed-term exclusions and to build a greater sense of trust and loyalty among our student body.”

(Dan Moynihan, Principal of the Harris City Academy in South London)

Research review

“My negative behaviour points (recorded by school) went down in this way: term 2 – 33 points, term 3 – 25 points, term 4 – 16 points, term 5 – 8 points. I felt good about myself as well as impressed with the dramatic drop in my negative points.”

(Young person involved in a behaviour focused programme)

The evaluation of the MBF programme was focused on the **‘formalisation’** of the peer mentoring provision which was felt to have **‘clear benefits’**. The evaluators highlighted that: **‘Factors influencing outcomes were related to the type and strength of processes employed by scheme co-ordinators for implementing the selected model and the systems subsequently established for developing the model employed. This suggested that ‘formalisation’ may be an attribute of peer mentoring projects that best provides a basis for what constitutes models.’**

MBF National Anti-bullying Peer Mentoring Pilot 2008-10

In 2008, MBF were commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, to run a two year pilot using peer mentoring in schools as a means of reducing bullying and helping young people to feel safer (in school). 150 schools were selected to take part in the pilot, comprising; 30 primary; 100 secondary and 20 special needs schools. During the life of the project, 6,000 young people were trained in peer mentoring and anti-bullying skills to help them to support their fellow pupils. The schools involved used a diversity of approaches to address bullying including one-to-one support, group mentoring and cyber-mentoring.

The evaluation of the programme was carried out by The Children’s Society’s Research Unit in the first year of the pilot.

The pilot’s findings showed that:

- 63% of the ‘most bullied’ students who went on to be mentored had experienced a reduction in bullying victimisation by the end of the year.
- For students most at risk of being bullied their general life satisfaction had increased – they were 62% closer to the national norm after mentoring engagement.
- More than 75% of students surveyed said that they had ‘gained confidence’ through working for peer mentoring schemes.
- The biggest positive shifts in scores for particular aspects of well-being were for ‘self-esteem’, where students were 80% closer to the national norm and ‘relatedness’ (the feeling that others are caring and supportive) where there was a 77% improvement.

“I was always losing my breaks and free time, but realised that what I was doing (bullying) was wrong and that I could make a more positive contribution, so I decided to become a peer mentor myself.”

(Year 9 peer mentor)

“I feel like I’ve learnt a lot: communications skills, being reliable enough to turn up and do a good job. And by helping them I’ve become more focused myself.”

(Peer mentor)

Research review

Transition studies

Two studies into issues of transition for young people have recently been produced which advocate the use of some form of peer support (Gulati and King 2009, Sutherland et al, 2010). Both studies were carried out in Bristol and sought qualitative feedback from schools and relevant agencies as well as interviews with young people. The studies emphasise the difficulties that transition can bring for young people, particularly vulnerable young people. The conclusions that they draw from their research provide a strong endorsement of peer initiatives.

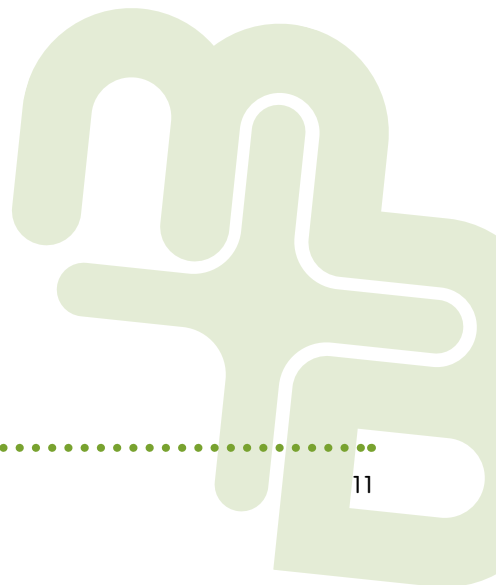
‘The primary finding of this study is that vulnerable young people can best be supported through addressing what is termed ‘poverty of well-being’. There is strong evidence (much of it international) that one-to-one support through different forms of mentoring and including other kinds of therapeutic support, if well planned, structured, and sustained, can change young people’s lives. The key element in effecting change for vulnerable young people is building a consistent relationship with another – a trusted adult or peer mentor – and within the context of their family where appropriate.’

(Gulati and King, 2009)

‘Pupils in general appreciated transition activities involving older pupils.... There is considerable potential for extending the involvement of pupils in transition and partnership work. Younger pupils enjoy drawing on the experience of older pupils, whether in person, as mentors, coaches and guides, or virtually, through email contact. Secondary schools in turn may wish to consider formally accrediting the work of their older pupils in transition, either through the Citizenship or Humanities curriculum or other awards.’

(Sutherland et al, 2010)

In another study on transition, Nelson (2003) carried out a qualitative study of a secondary school. The school operated a peer based mentoring scheme aimed to ease the transition from primary to secondary school. Nelson found that not only did the scheme ease the transition but the peer mentoring programme also assisted with the literacy and communication skills of mentors and mentees.



MBF Outcomes Measurement Programme 2009-10

In recent years, MBF have found that, while there are a number of excellent peer mentoring projects throughout schools in England, many of these schemes have been lacking in formal monitoring and evaluation which could lead to improvements and developments within the programme. During the 2009-10 academic year, MBF have worked with a number of schools to measure and collate outcomes which have been achieved by peer mentoring.

This support led to the development of an outcomes measurement tool for schools to help them define how peer mentoring fits into the wider 'School Improvement Plan' and has led to the production of a number of reports for individual schools showing the outcomes which they have achieved. The outcomes measurement tool is based on the evaluation model created by Prof Carl Parsons and his team at the University of Canterbury for the 2006-08 National Peer Mentoring Pilot. Currently, 23 of these projects have returned results which have been collated to show the outcomes which peer mentoring has achieved in the last year.

Number of young people involved

758 young people from 23 schools were tracked during the last academic year to show the outcomes which peer mentoring achieved. This group was made up of:

- 214 peer mentors
- 214 mentees
- 160 non-mentors
- 170 non-mentees

The management information relating to these students showed that:

- 30% of the mentees and 8% of the peer mentors were identified as having special educational needs
- 14% of the mentees and 7% of the peer mentors were eligible for free school meals
- 49% of mentees were male, only 41% of the peer mentors were male

Each of these schools chose from four different outcomes (attainment, attendance, behaviour and well-being) to measure depending on the aims and objectives of their scheme.

Attainment

26% of the schools chose to measure attainment as an outcome of peer mentoring. They did this using a number of different scales including estimated national curriculum levels and teacher assessment levels. The results from the schools show that:

- 68.8% of peer mentors improved their attainment compared to 58.0% of the control group of non-mentors
- 80.6% of mentees improved their attainment compared to 78% of the control group of non-mentees
- The average mentee improved their attainment by 14.2% compared to the average non-mentee's improvement of 11.9%

MBF Outcomes Measurement Programme 2009-10

Attendance

83% of schools chose attendance as an outcome to measure. This was carried out using school attendance records. The results from the schools show that:

- 64.9% of peer mentors improved or maintained their attendance compared to 57.7% of the non-mentoring control group
- 40.5% of mentees improved their attendance compared to 43% of a similar control group

However, the accuracy of these results is hindered by the fact that there are a number of different factors which affect attendance e.g. illness, holidays etc, which means that attendance records are not a particularly accurate method to use when measuring the impact of peer mentoring.

Behaviour

30% of schools chose behaviour as an outcome to measure. This was carried out in a number of ways including SIMS behaviour points and the number of referrals students have received. The results from the schools show that:

- 85.5% of peer mentors improved or maintained their good behaviour compared to 76.7% of non-mentors
- 81.6% of mentees improved or maintained their good behaviour compared to 75.0% of those who were not mentored

Well-being

44% of schools chose to measure the well-being of the young people who were being mentored. They used a number of methods for this including self assessment well-being surveys and staff perception of student's well-being. The results are as follows:

- 61.6% of mentees had an improvement in their well-being after peer mentoring compared to 37.8% of those students who were not mentored
- 54.3% of peer mentors improved their well-being after being peer mentors compared to 41.4% of those students who were not peer mentors

Review of the findings from the Outcomes Measurement Programme

These results collated to date and the case studies demonstrate that, when compared to a control group of similar young people, peer mentors and mentees have a higher rate of improvement in attainment, behaviour and well-being than their counterparts. Although the results for attendance are promising, more work needs to be done to improve the way in which the impact of peer mentoring on attendance is measured.

To build on these findings, MBF intends to support additional peer mentoring projects to measure their outcomes over the next year and build a wider base of research to identify the outcomes peer mentoring is achieving. In particular, the intention is to:

- Encourage schools to develop similar methods of recording some of the outcomes including attainment and behaviour
- Build the evidence to show how peer mentoring can meet and improve school targets

Research and policy implications

To date, as with many of the studies on mentoring provision, there are identifiable gaps within the existing research of peer mentoring. Many of the studies are short term and have relied predominantly on anecdotal data from participants and staff. Without a comparison group or the use of quantitative measures focused on specific areas, it is hard to ascertain the full impact of peer mentoring on different areas of young people's needs. There are still opportunities for longer term studies of peer mentoring and its outcomes to be undertaken that would provide a more rigorous evidential base for advocating peer mentoring within the school setting. Longer term studies would have allowed for evaluation of aspects such as the ability for peer mentoring to build resilience amongst participants and the impact in relation to access to further and higher education and/or employment.

Despite current limitations, the general message from the research is that peer mentoring is embedded within school culture, with participants offered benefits. The identified benefits include developing the skills and confidence of mentors and mentees as well as improving the general school environment. Peer mentoring is also perceived as assisting in developing a nurturing climate both within the school generally and amongst pupils.

The active involvement of young people as peer mentors fits well with the current Government agenda regarding the 'Big Society' which includes a focus on 'active citizenship'. Peer mentoring provides an opportunity for young people to learn about and experience volunteering as part of their educational experience and personal development. This experience will help them to gain social and interpersonal skills and will develop a culture of citizenship amongst younger generations. Research has highlighted that peer mentoring can play a crucial role in providing targeted support for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people in our society as well as providing a vehicle through which children and young people can develop and fulfil their potential.

The provision of peer mentoring in schools offers a cost effective and sustainable solution to raising the achievement and aspirations of children and young people as well as supporting their development. Good quality support in schools can also help to alleviate some of the workload for teachers, allowing them to focus on teaching and learning. Recent research carried out by Beatbullying indicates that strategies such as peer mentoring can reduce the number of incidents of bullying within participating schools:

'There has been a substantial increase in the levels of reporting of bullying (including cyber-bullying), by an average of 41% and a reduction in bullying incidents, by an average of 38% in participating schools. This means teachers and educational professionals are recording fewer incidents of bullying and pupil violence, consequently resulting in improved school climate and less pupil exclusions'.

In a similar vein, the shift towards early intervention with young people before behaviours become too entrenched also fits well with the concept of using peer mentoring support in schools. Allen and Duncan Smith (2009) emphasised the need for early intervention stating that "... **as young people go through the cycles of childhood to child-bearing (0-18 years) they should get the help they need when they need it. For many that will mean access to a full range of programmes intended to break the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage**".

MBF believes that peer support should be integral to any strategy aimed at helping children and young people achieve more in today's society. There is now a growing body of evidence both in terms of research and evidence from pilot projects to support the value of peer mentoring in schools. More sustainable, longer term investment is now needed to ensure that these schemes can be embedded in all schools across the country thus affirming the real difference that peer mentoring can make to the lives of children and young people.

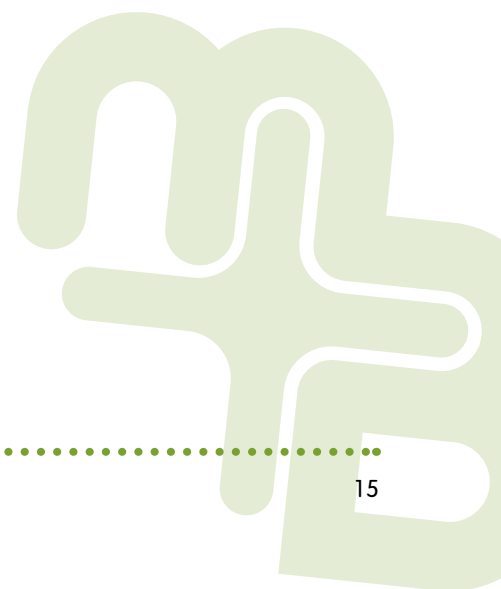
Conclusion

The research undertaken for this report identifies several key findings in relation to the delivery of and outcomes from peer mentoring within schools. Peer mentoring is well established in a significant number of primary and secondary schools in England. Although exact figures are still not available the data highlighted by both MBF and Houlston et al (2009) shows widespread implementation of schemes. Much of the work, to date, has focused on bullying but there has been an increasing focus on specific outcomes such as attendance, attainment, behaviour, transition and well-being. Whilst some programmes have been able to evidence positive outcomes in relation to these models, the quantifiable data collection continues to need work in order to be able to establish more robust evidence of achievement.

Despite this, the anecdotal and case study evidence is strong and it is clear that the young people (both mentors and mentees) and staff perceive the schemes to be beneficial in a number of ways. Most often cited are the gains for the young people in relation to soft outcomes such as confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. In addition, there is much written on the impact that schemes can have on the general school environment and the climate of the school. Much of the research also highlights the particular impact for vulnerable young people who can benefit from being involved both as mentees and mentors.

A further key finding relates to the structure of schemes and the importance of formalised systems of practice. Some features of effective programmes include: training for peer mentors, strong staff support of programmes - including senior staff support, systems for monitoring and evaluating outcomes, regular support provided to peer mentors, regular monitored meetings between mentors and mentees and profiling of the programme within the school in order to ensure take up. These findings would endorse a benchmarking process such as implementation of the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation's Approved Provider Standard, which many of the more effective schemes have achieved.

It would seem apparent that regardless of current gaps in the evidence base, peer mentoring has found a place within the education setting and is viewed favourably by those involved in both its management and delivery. Schemes that employ a degree of formalisation such as effective training and support for mentors are seen to produce greater results amongst participants and are likely to have more longevity.



Case study: Budmouth Technology College, Helping Hands

Budmouth Technology College has a student-led peer mentoring scheme aimed at supporting 'middle of the road' students. The college has been delivering peer mentoring for some years with one-to-one support being offered to both students and parents prior to their arrival at the school to help prepare them for the transition. Peer mentoring has been well-embedded within the school's pastoral system. A recent OFSTED report identified the peer mentors as 'providing excellent support'.

Budmouth Technology College signed up to MBF's outcomes pilot for 2009-10. As part of the monitoring for the pilot, the college tracked 40 pupils throughout the year 2009-10. The tracked pupils represented four groups - 10 peer mentors, 10 mentees, 10 year 10/11 pupils not acting as peer mentors and 10 year 7 pupils not having one-to-one support from peer mentors. The aim being to provide data of those involved in peer mentoring and those not involved. The focus of the measurement was on attendance and well-being.

"The effective use of peer mentoring has enabled all students to feel safe and have access to a variety of mentors if and when they are bullied. The success of the scheme is down to ownership and hard work and our peer mentors have worked very hard to ensure that the college's anti-bullying policy is successful."

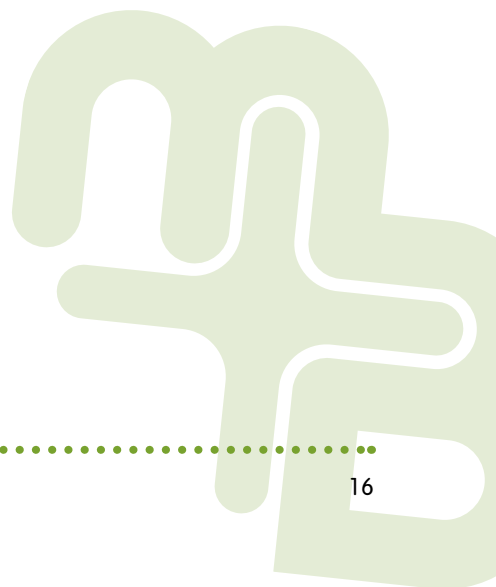
(College Principal)

Through their involvement with the outcomes pilot Budmouth Technology College found that:

- 80% of the mentees improved their attendance compared to only 40% of those who were not mentored
- 60% of the peer mentors improved their attendance compared to only 30% of those who were not mentoring other young people
- 60% of the mentees improved their behaviour compared to 20% of those who were not being mentored
- 50% of the peer mentors improved their behaviour compared to 30% of those who were not acting as peer mentors

"I was worried the very first day because I was going to be mixed in with lots of people that I didn't know... My mentor has helped me set the right targets to help make a difference to my behaviour."

(Mentee with Asperger's)



Case study: Brady Primary School, Rainham, Essex

Brady Primary School set up and developed a peer mentoring scheme aimed at year 4 and 5 pupils as part of MBF's Anti-bullying Pilot 2008-10. The project gained the Approved Provider Standard in 2009.

The school now trains all pupils in year 6 to be peer mentors as part of PSHE as they feel that the skills gained through the training are an important part of a child's social and emotional development. Their mentees are from years 4 and 5.

Mentors use target setting with their mentees, play games or listen to their concerns. The scheme has also introduced a drop in session for other members of the school who wish to speak to a mentor about any concerns they may be having in the playground.

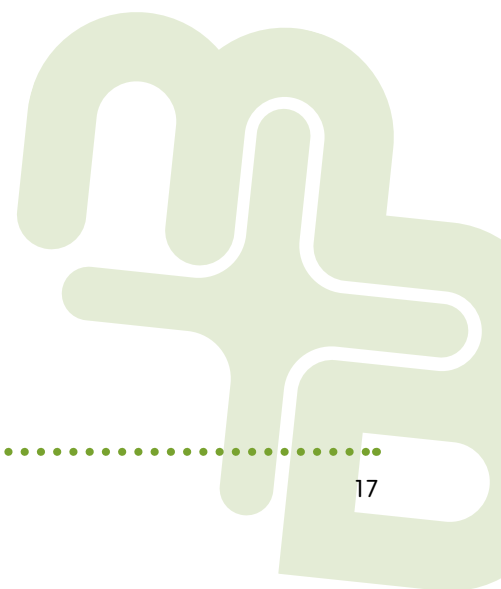
What impact has the scheme made?

Evaluation of the scheme has shown that both the mentors and mentees have seen significant improvement in confidence and self-esteem and are now fully aware of the impact of bullying. Peer mentors have also been shown an increase in self awareness, self-esteem and confidence.

In February 2010, an OFSTED inspection was carried out at the school. This showed that the implementation of peer mentoring has given the pupils greater responsibility, training, pupil voice and the ability to develop emotional intelligence. The school was graded outstanding.

'Pupils involve themselves in school decision making and make an excellent contribution to a wide range of activities including mentoring and befriending to more isolated pupils'.

(OFSTED, 2010)



Case study: Beatbullying - CyberMentors

In March 2009, Beatbullying placed its existing peer mentoring model online with CyberMentors (cybermentors.org.uk). CyberMentors is delivered through social networking technology, resulting in a peer-to-peer website in which young people experiencing bullying, on and/or offline, can be assisted by other young people.

Training for the mentoring role consists of a six-stage, 30 hour accredited programme and is delivered by a team including accredited counsellors and a clinical child psychologist. CyberMentors is the UK's first and only early intervention practice based peer mentoring model that exists on and offline, responding to the 'needs' of young people who increasingly use new technology.

Beatbullying is currently working closely with the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation to achieve 'Approved Provider Standard' accreditation for its mentoring service.

Beatbullying's objectives include:

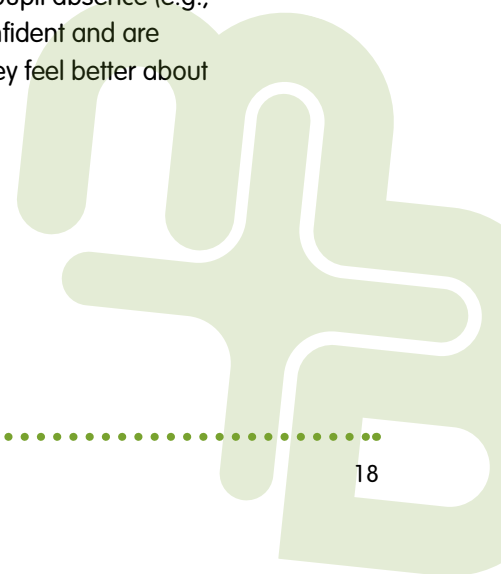
- Reduce the reporting and incidences of cyber-bullying in participating schools by a minimum of 40%
- Improve levels of pupil absenteeism (e.g., levels of truancy), related to bullying in participating schools
- Reduce levels of Incidents of Concern (IoCs), improve pupil behaviour and wider school climate, consequently reducing levels of exclusions (generally, and bullying related) in participating schools

Independent evaluation undertaken by New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), highlights improved levels of well-being for children trained to become CyberMentors. The NPC Well-being questionnaire measures seven domains of children well-being including: self-esteem, resilience, emotional health, relationships with family, relationships with friends, satisfaction with community/environment, and satisfaction with school.

To date, the project has been delivered in up to 150 schools; graduating up to 3,000+ CyberMentors aged 11 to 16 years old. The website has recorded over 900,000 unique users and a further 8 million page views and there has been a total number of 477,703 mentoring interactions.

Evaluation in partnership with the University of Sussex has shown that just under a third (31%) of pupil exclusions (e.g., persistent/disruptive behaviours) have been reduced as a result of the implementation of CyberMentors.

Four-out-of-every-ten (37%) schools participating in CyberMentors indicate a reduction in the levels of pupil violence. Just over a quarter (27%) of schools indicate a reduction in the levels of pupil absence (e.g., levels of truancy). After working with Beatbullying, young people feel happier, more confident and are more likely to reach their full potential. They are more outgoing and better behaved, they feel better about themselves and they get on better with each other.



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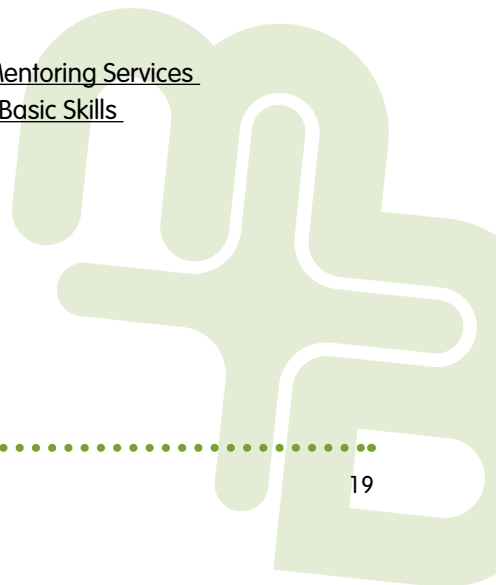
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