‘It is not only possible for one human being to make a real and lasting difference to another, it is often the only thing that ever does’.

Transforming Lives
Examining the positive impact of mentoring and befriending
This report marks the start of a journey to encourage more effective evaluation of outcomes for mentoring and befriending projects across the voluntary, education and statutory sectors. As mentoring and befriending become increasingly popular so the responsibility to demonstrate impact to stakeholders, in particular, commissioners and funders, increases.

The report highlights a number of organisations that have been able to clearly demonstrate the positive impact that mentoring and befriending can have on people who are facing challenges in their lives, whether they are children going to a new school, young people ‘at risk’, offenders who need support to stop them from re-offending or refugees facing barriers to integration.

This report provides a timely reminder of the very real impact that mentoring and befriending is having in a number of areas, but it is not the end of the story. If mentoring and befriending are to become a major thrust in government public policy, and attract greater public and private investment, then a common approach to understanding and measuring outcomes is required.

The projects referred to in this report are at the forefront in terms of good practice and in recognising the importance of effective evaluation. We need to harness what they have achieved, share the lessons they have learned and encourage others to follow their example.

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation already offers guidance, support and training to organisations in these areas and actively supports the development of practical evaluation for mentoring and befriending projects. Over the coming months we will be exploring the potential for developing a common framework for measuring the impact of mentoring and befriending which projects, government, commissioners and funders would be willing to support.

The American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world”.

I agree with this sentiment and whilst volunteers may not always ‘change the world’, they can and do have a big impact on the lives of those they volunteer with, particularly if they are involved in mentoring and befriending.

There is huge value in two people working together to solve problems and tackle issues and this report includes many examples that exemplify the impact that mentors and befrienders have. The examples include people volunteering with children or with young people ‘at risk’ and with refugees facing barriers to integration.

The challenge for organisations that involve mentors and befrienders is, as ever, showing and demonstrating the value of their work. This report is a significant stride to addressing this challenge and I hope that it becomes required reading for policy makers in central and local government.

Foreword
by Angela Smith MP, Minister for the Third Sector

The American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world”.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mentoring and befriending are helping to transform individual lives. They are also contributing significantly to key government goals.

- In education, mentoring and befriending are being used successfully in school initiatives to support recent government legislation. One-to-one mentoring is at the heart of the Children’s Plan and many schools have introduced peer mentoring as a direct response to the Every Child Matters (ECM) programme and other initiatives including Healthy Schools.

- Mentors are playing a key role as role models for vulnerable young people in initiatives such as Aimhigher, Excellence in Cities, Learning Gateway and Connexions. In future, the Government aims to ensure that mentoring advice and support is available to every child from low income backgrounds to help them get into university as well as to all young people ‘leaving care’.1

- The Neuberger review of volunteering in the criminal justice system highlights the role that offenders and ex-offenders can play in peer support programmes. Mentoring schemes like the Pyramid Project and the St Giles Trust Peer Advice Scheme are at the forefront of these developments.

- An independent evaluation of the ‘Time Together’ programme concluded that mentoring had a positive impact on the integration of refugees in terms of achieving potential, contributing to the community and accessing services. Using the ‘Time Together’ model, mentoring will form a major component of the new national Refugee Integration and Employment Service.

- The ‘Communities in Control’ White Paper (2008) recommends the use of mentoring and befriending as a means of promoting active citizenship, emphasising that strong and supportive one-to-one relationships are at the centre of every successful community.2

- Mentoring and befriending are a highly effective means of encouraging ‘active citizenship’, with the capacity to increase both volunteer numbers and diversity. The Goldsmith Citizenship review recognises the role that mentoring and befriending can play and promotes the involvement of young people, employees and new migrants.

- Investing in mentoring and befriending gives a cost-effective social return. Preventative action and early intervention mentoring and befriending programmes are bringing significant savings for government. As well as improving the quality of life for vulnerable groups, many of the projects described in this study are delivering long term social and economic benefits.

Mentoring and befriending are helping to transform individual lives. They are also contributing significantly to key government goals.
Introduction
The number of mentoring and befriending projects is large – and growing. At the last count, MBF was in contact with over 3500 individual schemes. The aims of these projects are diverse and include:

- Behavioural change (building confidence, self esteem, social skills)
- Reduction of unwanted behaviour (criminal activity, truanting, drug abuse)
- Developing skills
- Expanding opportunities
- Integration into ‘mainstream’ community
- Reducing isolation

Projects can be found in schools, in the community, in prisons, and in businesses.

This report is based on the analysis of a number of mentoring and befriending projects that show the positive outcomes that were achieved. It also draws on the work of previous research, including the findings of two national pilot initiatives. It looks at the impact of mentoring and befriending under a number of outcome headings, such as reducing re-offending and improving social integration, and seeks to position these findings in relation to government policy and wider social and economic goals.

The best evaluations use a combination of quantitative and qualitative information. Consequently, in addition to statistical data relating to the main outcomes, the report draws extensively on the perceptions and comments of the individuals involved – those for whom contact with a mentor or befriender has made a significant difference to their lives.

Linking the projects used in the report are certain features:

- Participation in the schemes is voluntary
- Most are peer-to-peer or near-to-peer
- The emphasis is on sharing knowledge and experience rather than specialist skills
- With one exception, mentors and befrienders are unremunerated volunteers

The terms mentoring and befriending are often used interchangeably. Both involve the development of a relationship in which one individual, who is not family or a close friend, voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another.

The main difference is the emphasis placed on goals. Although there are social elements to the relationship, mentoring is a goal-oriented process that supports learning and development and consequently tends to be time-limited. Befriending tends to develop more informal and supportive social relationships, often over a longer period of time.

The achievement of goals is not as central to the relationship as in mentoring and these may be defined only in broad or limited terms.

Traditionally, mentoring and befriending has involved a one-to-one relationship based on face-to-face meetings. However, this has evolved to include other models such as group mentoring and e-mentoring so that the model depends on why, where and with whom it is being used.
Developing confidence and skills at school
Recent government legislation, including the extended schools development, the extension of the school leaving age, the Every Child Matters (ECM) programme and the Children’s Plan ‘Building Brighter Futures’, recognises that schools have an important role to play in supporting pupils’ wider social development, developing confidence and promoting their well-being. This is an agenda to which mentoring and befriending can contribute.

Supporting schools

The raising of the school leaving age creates an opportunity to offer young people new experiences and the chance to develop enriching mentoring and befriending relationships that support transition to adulthood.

Working in partnership is fundamental to this new agenda. 21st century schools have a strong outward-facing focus, operating as the hub of communities, cementing links between schools and the neighbourhoods that feed into them and providing better access to a range of services for young people, families and the wider community.

An example of how a number of schools have used mentoring to support their young people is provided by the Leeds Aimhigher initiative. This scheme targets ethnic minority students with the potential to move on to higher education but who are at risk of leaving education early through lack of motivation, or lack of academic support. Mentors are graduate/postgraduate students recruited from local universities each of whom supports a cohort of 10-12 students.

In order to establish the added value of volunteer mentors in raising achievement, the scheme used the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) database to track a cohort of Year 11 students who had received mentor support. Overall 71% of students mentored by adult volunteers met or surpassed their FFT GCSE scores. For Black and Ethnic Minority students the figure was even higher – 83% met or surpassed their target.

The scheme has proved so successful that it is now operating beyond Leeds in four other West Yorkshire local authorities.

All schools have a duty to ‘promote the well-being’ of their students. Those that introduce mentoring and befriending can demonstrate a practical commitment to the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes and to the Healthy Schools and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programmes.

The most successful and sustainable schemes are the ones that contribute to wider school goals. As well as the ECM and ‘Healthy Schools’ agenda, mentoring and befriending are employed as part of school initiatives for improving educational attainment, pupil behaviour, school-to-school transition and pastoral support. As a result, mentoring and befriending programmes, and peer mentoring in particular, increasingly feature in school improvement plans.

Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring draws on one of the most untapped resources that every school has available – its own pupils.

It is being used successfully to support transition between primary and secondary schools, improve examination performance and deal with disruptive behaviour, including anti-bullying strategies. It is also a means of countering negative peer pressure and encouraging a more positive attitude amongst young people.

Peer mentoring gives young people their own ‘voice’ and an opportunity to make both a real difference to the quality of their school life and also to develop skills which can enhance their future educational and employment prospects.

The commitment in the Children’s Plan to develop the vision for the 21st Century School places personalised support at the heart of its approach. This must be about partnership between children – ‘shared responsibility’ in the new government rhetoric – as well as about the relationships between children and school staff. Every child a friend, every child befriended should be a feature of the 21st Century School. Every child mentored, every child a peer-mentor might be the next step.6

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We will look to expand opportunities for peer mentoring. Young people can be effective volunteer mentors and support other young people at key stages of their development. They can act as role models, raising aspirations and achievements and exerting a powerful influence on young people. They can be particularly effective with those who have become disengaged from their communities or from learning.7

The Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’ (July 2005)

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The Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’ (July 2005)
Previous research on the impact of peer mentoring consistently produces positive results.

- Participating young people improved school attendance/performance and relationships with parents and peers.
- Schools operating a peer mentoring programme created a more favourable school climate and showed a decline in pupil drop-out rates.
- Peer tutoring and mentoring fostered strong bonds between mentors and mentees, helped new students and those with limited proficiency in English to integrate more successfully into the school environment and encouraged academic achievement.
- Children who attended lessons on violence prevention given by their peers showed a decrease in their violence-related attitudes and increased self-esteem.
- Pupils participating in a scheme to support transition from primary to secondary school showed more self-confidence, were less anxious about transition and improved their key skills and learning.

Equally positive results were produced in a recent evaluation of the national peer mentoring pilot (2006/8), managed by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and involving 180 schools and more than 14,500 young people.

Against the key outcomes of the pilot:

- 90% of school co-ordinators said there had been improvements in both transition and attainment assessments.
- 60% of co-ordinators reported improvements in dealing with bullying.
- 40% reported reductions in suspensions and detentions where the focus had been on pupil behaviour.

The popularity of peer mentoring amongst pupils was striking:

- Over 80% of mentees felt positively about having a mentor.
- 93% of peer mentors thought the experience had been beneficial for them and were pleased they had participated, with the majority giving the reason of being glad to help others.

In the assessment of one of the head teachers involved:

‘By targeting specific students with this form of intervention we have helped to drastically reduce our fixed-term exclusions and built a greater sense of trust and loyalty among our student body.’

Principal of one of the schools involved in the National Peer Mentoring Pilot 2006-08.

Case study: ‘Citizenship in action’

Once on the brink of suspension from school, Jason was mentored, which was a great help to him. What helped even more was becoming a peer mentor himself. Jason firmly believes that mentoring has changed his life. He is now a teacher, training at the school where he was once a peer mentor!

‘I felt that some of the teachers didn’t understand me and it was easy for me to give them some attitude.’

‘But I found a mentor who helped me see where I was going wrong and realised I had to find a way of relating to those teachers, despite how I felt. That changed everything… I saw younger kids going through the same thing and became a role model for them (by being a peer mentor). Then I realised I could make a difference – and that’s what made me want to be a teacher.’

‘I find I can relate to pupils that are at risk as I can talk with them in a less formal setting which definitely has its benefits. As I was involved with the mentoring programme at school, I began to look at things in a different light. My mentor understood me as a person and so gained my respect. This helped me gain my A Levels. Using the same technique to motivate myself, I then went on to get my degree.’

‘Coming through the mentor programme has given me skills that have aided my teaching and have also assisted my decision to become a community mentor. This is my opportunity to give back to the community.’

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Engaging young people ‘at risk’
Children and young people who are looked after by local authorities are some of the most vulnerable in society. Unlike the vast majority of young people, they have little or no access to supportive family networks to help them make an effective transition to adulthood.

Alongside other relevant services, mentoring and befriending are being used to redress this imbalance.

In developing strategies for ‘looked after children’ there is increasing recognition of the need for formal or informal personal support. Research also shows that a key factor affecting the future achievement and welfare of those leaving the care system is the consistent support and encouragement of a significant adult who can act as a mentor and role model.

Following the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, local authorities are now required to appoint an ‘independent visitor’ to befriend children in care, where it is in their interests to do so. From September, 2009, all young people ‘leaving care’ will also have access to mentoring support.

Paul was nine when referred to Friends United Network (FUN) after displaying serious behavioural problems. His mother was often in prison and he never knew his father. He stayed with his grandmother.

He was matched with Sarah, a young lawyer, and their befriending relationship has continued for more than nine years. As well as going on outings together including ice skating, swimming and visits to museums, Sarah was able to find Paul work experience at her law firm and with the local MP.

His behaviour has changed "beyond recognition," and Paul has been taking AS Level exams and aspires to go to Oxford University.

FUN provides long-term, sustained and reliable adult support for children from low income or single parent families who have experienced difficult and fragmented home lives. 52% of children referred in 2008, for example, had experienced domestic violence in the home. Befriending relationships usually last for at least two years, often longer, providing long-term stability for children from such chaotic backgrounds.

FUN was independently evaluated by The Academic Unit of Child Psychology at Guy’s Hospital London. The report concluded that 79% of the young people had improved mental health and reduced emotional problems as a result of the support.

Increasing numbers of young people are described by government, researchers and the media as being ‘disaffected’, ‘at risk’ or in danger of ‘social exclusion’ from today’s society.

Young people ‘at risk’ are more likely to academically underachieve and be excluded from the education system. They are also more likely than their ‘mainstream’ peers to be held back by a lack of basic skills, financial difficulties, drug or alcohol abuse, behavioural problems, or a criminal record. Typically, they are amongst the most vulnerable young people and include those without families or a stable family background.

Contributing to key initiatives

Backed by policy publications such as ‘Every Child Matters’, a range of initiatives - Aimhigher, Excellence in Cities, Learning Gateway, Connexions - have been introduced in a bid to support and re-engage young people who are ‘at risk’ and promote greater social cohesion.

Mentoring has been integrated into all of these initiatives as a key element of their activities. It is an ideal mechanism for fostering ‘community based’ strategies, and can make a significant contribution as part of a package of measures managed through effective inter-agency collaboration.

‘Sarah is smart, a good role model but not too strict. I see her as an adult but also as one of my mates. I get on so well with her and her partner. They give me a different perspective on life.’

Sarah is an independent visitor who has been matched with Paul.
High quality mentoring projects are well structured with clear, specified and attainable objectives. They provide targeted support that can help to reduce behavioural difficulties and offer a basis from which other outcomes can be developed.

Improving behaviour in young people

Previous research shows that vulnerable young people who receive mentoring support at an early stage are:

- More likely to have better school attendance, achievement and attitudes and behaviours towards education 19
- Become more engaged with school, therefore reducing the risk of exclusion 19
- Show an increase in self-confidence and esteem 20
- Have a more positive view on school and therefore become more engaged 21
- Increase their ‘liking’ for school, which may be the first step towards an improvement in academic achievement 22

The Chance UK mentoring programme is an excellent example of what can be achieved using a well structured model of mentoring that involves a high degree of individual support.

Primary school children with behavioural difficulties or considered to be at risk of developing criminal and anti-social behaviour are referred onto the programme. They are at risk of exclusion from school, have difficulty concentrating and following instructions from adults, and have problems making friends.

- 78% of the children referred are from single parent families and 58% receive free school meals
- 32% have already faced exclusion from school and many more are at risk of exclusion due to poor behaviour

Mentoring is delivered by carefully screened and trained volunteers, who are closely supervised and supported by a professional staff team. Mentor and mentee meet once a week for a year, with each meeting lasting for two to four hours. Emphasis is placed on developing the child’s competences and capacity to find their own solutions using a goal-oriented process, targeted on three areas of activity – recreational, behavioural and educational.

A significant feature of the scheme is the degree of interaction and contact that is maintained with referring agencies and parents of the young people ‘at risk’. Parents are regularly updated on progress and are involved in setting goals and ground rules. They can also access general support from a dedicated parent worker.

The Chance UK mentoring project shows that a positive change in behaviour can have a knock-on effect on other outcomes, including academic progress, family relationships and the ability to make friends. Referrers remarked on children’s improvements in concentration, literacy and numeracy and improved attitudes to learning.

Results from an evaluation study found that:

- 98% of children referred show a reduction in their behavioural difficulty at the end of the mentoring year, with 51% no longer classed as having behavioural difficulties
- The majority of parents reported relationships with their children had improved as a result of the mentoring
- Three to five years after the end of the mentoring, the children retained their improvements in personal and interpersonal behaviour, concentration and emotional control and in the pupils’ relationship with peers and adults 24

Case study: ‘Inspiring positive change’

Dwayne was referred to Chance UK when he was 10. His initial SDQ score was 21, clearly showing that he had a behavioural difficulty (Goodman’s Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used as a basis for assessment).

In the six months prior to mentoring, Dwayne had been excluded from school for a total of 5 days. He was unable to deal with his frustration and anger and would react inappropriately. He also did not have any close friends and tended to dominate groups.

Dwayne was matched with John, a volunteer mentor who met regularly with him for 2-4 hours a week for a year. They worked on specific goals as well as going swimming, attending a football match and building models.

At the end of the mentoring period, Dwayne’s teacher saw many improvements in his behaviour. He had become much more settled in the classroom and much more focused on his work. He was also able to form more balanced relationships with his peers. His communication skills had generally improved, and he was starting to negotiate.

Dwayne’s anger management and self-control had also improved; he was no longer ‘flying off the handle’ and making inappropriate comments.

Dwayne’s mother also felt that there had been positive changes. ‘Dwayne opens up more and talks about school and his feelings.’ She felt that ‘the opportunity to talk in a one-to-one situation had given him the opportunity to learn to listen.’

At the end of the mentoring, Dwayne’s SDQ score had dropped to 10, bringing him out of the behavioural difficulty category. During the 12 month period of the mentoring he was never excluded from school, a clear sign that his behaviour had improved.
Reducing re-offending
The prison population has risen by more than a third during the past decade. Almost four per cent of the 16-25 year old population are young offenders.

Re-offending rates are high – two-thirds (65%) of prisoners are reconvicted within two years of release from custody at an estimated cost of £65,000 per prisoner to the point of re-imprisonment and £38,000 for every year of imprisonment thereafter (HM Government, 2004/5).

The statistics also reveal that, among those who re-offend, 64% will do so within the first six months. The figures underline the importance of providing successful support to ex-offenders in the early stages of their return to the community.

Importance of mentoring

In this context, mentoring support can make a real difference. It can be a means of both reducing re-offending and improving access to opportunities in education, training and employment. Mentors can provide young offenders, in particular, with positive role models that they can learn to trust and respect.

The National Evaluation of Youth Justice Board Mentoring Schemes 2001-2004 reported significant improvements in family relationships and performance and behaviour at school amongst young offenders receiving mentoring support.

Nor is mentoring something that is being imposed on those in custody. A Prince’s Trust survey found that:

• 65% of offenders under the age of 25 said that having the support of a mentor would help them to stop re-offending
• 71% said they would prefer a mentor who is a former offender
• 85% thought that starting mentoring whilst in custody would be beneficial

There is no shortage of people who can testify to the value of the mentoring support they received. Clare, an ex-drug user who went to prison seven times for shoplifting was helped by the New Hope Mentoring Programme. She is unequivocal about the benefits of having a mentor.

‘I would like to tell the Prime Minister how important it is to have someone to go to and someone to support you when you first come out of prison. Everyone who leaves prison should have access to a mentor like mine.’

‘I feel like a real citizen now and we are paying our bills. By next year, I would like to be in college; and when I am over everything that has happened to me, I want to get a job. One day I would like to be a mentor, so I can help someone like me.’

Mantle, New Hope Mentoring Programme

‘A policy framework’

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) report ‘Working with the Third Sector to reduce re-offending’ sets out a framework for involving voluntary and community sector organisations in work to reduce levels of re-offending. The measures outlined in the report support the Government’s goal of a thriving and independent third sector and the overarching ‘Third Sector Strategy’ which promotes the use of volunteering in public service delivery.

The MOJ report acknowledges the valuable contribution that volunteers and mentors already make to the criminal justice system and puts forward proposals to enhance the quality and impact of their work.

The views of the MOJ report are reinforced by the results of Baroness Neuberger’s review of volunteering across the criminal justice system (March, 2009) which concluded:

‘There simply wouldn’t be a reliable criminal justice system in this country without the dedication of volunteers.’

Involving offenders

The Neuberger review highlights the role that offenders and ex-offenders can play in rehabilitation and resettlement processes, by themselves acting as mentors and befrienders.

Prisoners are being empowered to take responsibility for their own and other prisoners’ resettlement. During custody, peer support schemes include ‘listeners’ support to prevent suicide and self harm, ‘insiders’ schemes assisting with reception and induction of new prisoners and peer advice and support focussed on resettlement, employment and substance misuse. On release, offenders are using their experiences, new skills and confidence in mentoring initiatives that support rehabilitation and act as a gateway to employment, training or education.

The St Giles Trust Peer Advice Project is one scheme that is at the forefront of these developments. In addition to peer advice in prison, the Trust offers employment experience for offenders on their release from custody via their involvement in mentoring schemes, including ‘through the gate’ services to support the resettlement of their peers.

‘There is particular potential for people who’ve experienced the system to support others. Nobody is better placed to work with prisoners and reduce re-offending than someone who has experienced prison. A positive Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check could sometimes be viewed as an advantage for certain voluntary roles.’

‘Volunteering across the Criminal Justice System’ Baroness Neuberger Review, (March, 2009)
Case study: ‘Transforming lives - Lynn’s story’

Lynn is a 33-year-old woman who was sent to Low Newton prison on charges of child neglect. She lived in constant fear, both of others discovering the nature of her crime and of what would happen to her four children who had been placed in permanent care. She had very low self-esteem and had been sexually, mentally and physically abused from the age of six.

She became involved with the Pyramid Project and was assigned an approved Nacro mentor. The mentor worked with her to overcome the shame she felt about her crime and also referred her to Families in Care (an organisation which specialises in helping women whose children have been removed) to help her better understand the process. She also recognised that Lynn suffered from dyslexia and helped her make adjustments so she could keep up with her course-work.

Nacro was able to find Lynn accommodation in one of its properties which provided some much-needed stability. This step enabled her both to relocate to an area away from where she had committed her crimes, and to foster her growing sense of independence.

Since then her mentor has encouraged her to join her local church, complete a Level 1 qualification in painting and decorating, enrol in college to do a floristry course, and has coached her for job interviews. She has also persuaded her to attend counselling to deal with the abuse in her past. Lynn is now settled and engaged to a local man. She has moved into permanent accommodation and is looking for a job.

In her own words: ‘I now have a life of my own and a future that I can shape and influence.’

She says mentoring has given her a lot more confidence, encouraged her to think differently about her life and, that without the support of her mentor, she would never have been able to see the positives about herself and her future.

Peer advisers are positive about their participation in the scheme, seeing it as an important step in stopping the cycle of re-offending. The opportunity to help others also provides a strong motivation for their involvement.

The extent to which mentoring can turn a person’s life around is strikingly illustrated by Lynn’s story:

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Improving social integration
The early experiences of a person on moving to the UK are critical to their sense of belonging. Individuals also differ in their understanding and capacity to respond to the demands and opportunities presented by their new environment.

Supporting integration

It is important not to underestimate the capability of new migrants: many are resourceful and highly motivated and can draw on friends and family and other migrants to access resources and make sense of their new surroundings.

However, there are many who are alone and vulnerable and are unable to access the help they require. This is where cross-cultural one-to-one support can be vital in countering isolation and further exclusion.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC) report recognised that community is first and foremost about individuals, and how they interact and support each other. It regards active citizenship and community empowerment as a foundation for building social integration and cohesion and recommends the use of volunteer mentors as a means of improving mutual understanding and respect.

The Ramp Mentoring Service is an example of mentoring that draws extensively on the support of local communities. Operating in the London Borough of Newham, mentors are recruited from all over London, from mainstream and refugee communities, and matched with refugees from various countries with the aim of increasing independence and assisting their integration into the UK.

Mentors support mentees with language development, and help them to access information, employment and training.

Since 2002, over 98% of mentees involved in the scheme have accessed training or education. Most participants also show increased self-confidence, self-esteem, use of initiative and improved language skills. A substantial number have also gained employment.

The impact of the mentoring programme on its clients is captured in the words of a former participant:

’I thank my mentor; if not for her, I would not have achieved my goals. Now I am not lonely and I am not afraid to speak to people.’

‘A personal approach’

What is needed is an approach to integration that can be adapted to the needs of the individual. Just as integration is a very personal and individual process, mentoring and befriending provide a uniquely flexible means of enabling someone to feel validated and supported as they engage with the opportunities and demands of their new environment.

Mentors and befrienders are particularly effective at supporting individuals at a time of transition. In the context of social integration, they can offer practical help such as getting to know the local area better and facilitate access to education, voluntary work, employment and various public services. Successful mentoring and befriending relationships also bring other, less tangible but no less significant benefits, such as enhanced self-confidence.

‘The confidence-building function of the mentor is worth emphasising given its wide-ranging impact on other dimensions of mentees’ lives.’

‘Accessing public services, finding a job, applying for a place at college or university, approaching organisations to volunteer, engaging with strangers and attempting to make friends – all of these key activities demand that the individuals feel confident in their own self-worth.’
Case Study: Michael and Faduma

Michael, 44, Public Affairs Consultant

Getting to know Faduma has increased my awareness about the journey of refugees who are trying to start a new life in the UK. Mentoring Faduma has shown me that refugees are hardworking, intelligent people who desperately want to work. They are real people with real stories and real lives.

Faduma, 31, Mother and Student

I fled the civil war in Somalia with my three year old son. Before I met Michael I was on the bottom step of a long ladder and I didn’t know where to turn. I didn’t know anything about the UK employment, education or cultural systems and the only people I knew were other Somalis in the same position as me.

Michael was great because he helped me to find and apply for a university course in human rights advocacy and development studies and to understand the best way to go about finding a job. Before I met him I felt afraid and thought people would look at me as just another refugee. But Michael helped me to get my confidence back so I felt able to engage with people in the UK and build a life for myself. The thing about immigration is it’s a two way street: I’ve learnt from Michael and he’s learnt from me.

I now work part time for the Employability Forum on their Opening Doors for Refugee Teachers. I have also been awarded a Rayne Foundation Fellowship which has given me the opportunity to work as a researcher for a Member of Parliament.

‘Time Together’

The Goldsmith ‘Citizenship’ review recommends mentoring as a means of supporting social integration, basing its proposals on a model of mentoring developed by the TimeBank ‘Time Together’ programme.

Originally established in London, Birmingham and Glasgow, ‘Time Together’ has since expanded to 24 locations across the UK and by 2008 had provided mentoring support for over 2000 refugees.

Using the Home Office indicators of integration, an independent evaluation of the programme found that ‘Time Together’ had a positive impact on the integration of refugees in terms of achieving potential, contributing to the community and accessing services.

The success of ‘Time Together’ placed mentoring at the centre of 'Integration Matters', the 2005 national strategy for refugee integration. In a recent Home Office review of this strategy (‘Moving on Together’ Home Office, UK Border Agency, March 2009), mentoring will be one of three core elements in the new national Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES). The mentoring component of RIES builds on the success of the ‘Time Together’ model.

A survey of the views of mentees participating in ‘Time Together’ shows that:

- 96% felt they understood more English
- 85% of those who were seeking employment felt that they had made progress during their mentoring relationship
- 88% said they had more friends from different cultural backgrounds
- 96% felt they had a better understanding of UK culture and people’s behaviour
- 86% felt they knew more about how to access further education courses
- 96% felt they knew their town or city better
- 90% felt at home in the UK
- 87% felt more integrated into UK society than when they started the relationship

Mentors also benefited from their experience. They appreciated the rewards of helping another individual, the cultural exchange, a new friendship in some cases, and a greater understanding of the experiences of refugees in the UK.

‘Mentoring can have enormous benefits in terms of helping refugees to integrate, by improving their English through conversation and receiving orientation and advice from a mentor who is an established citizen of the UK.’

‘A simple relationship between two strangers can change lives. It is clear, on the basis of evidence gathered over the year covered by this longitudinal evaluation that the successful pairs who were trained, matched and supported with care and consistency, stand as a testament to the powerful contribution of mentoring to refugee integration.’
Combating isolation
Support for older people

MBF is in contact with over 500 befriending schemes that provide support for older people. The aims of these schemes differ but many are designed to combat loneliness and reduce social isolation. Support can take a variety of forms including home visits, telephone contact and involvement in community activities.

Befriending is not a substitute for public health and care services. It does, however, make a contribution that is distinctive from other services. Research shows that the voluntary nature of the relationship is crucial to successful outcomes as it is often more highly valued by those being befriended than relationships with professionals.

One befriending project worker based in Bradford emphasises this point saying: ‘The befriender is seen as a trusted, reliable friend; they are not only in a position to offer companionship and activities outside the home but can also encourage the take up of services such as ‘Meals on Wheels’ in a way that a social worker couldn’t.’

Preventative social care such as befriending can help older people maintain their independence for longer.

Age Concern North Yorkshire provides a ‘home secretary’ befriending service for older people living in their own homes. Support can be anything from helping to write Christmas cards, letters to friends, reading mail, organising paperwork or dealing with utility bills.

People with health and social care needs are not simply passive consumers but citizens who wish to live independently, with control over their lives and who have a right to make a positive contribution to society.

These are principles that underpin recent government legislation. The Communities in Control White Paper (2008) seeks to create strong and prosperous communities and deliver better public services through a rebalancing of the relationship between central government, local government and local people. It places strong emphasis on giving citizens and communities a much bigger say in the services they receive and in the quality of the communities in which they live.

The White Paper also highlights voluntary mentoring and befriending as a means of enabling citizens to become more active, emphasizing that strong and supportive one to one relationships are at the centre of every successful community.

These developments, combined with a move away from reactive health and social care to preventative services and support, have influenced the growth of mentoring and befriending in health and community care provision.

Mentoring and befriending both have a wide range of applications. Befriending, in particular, is well established, providing a supportive adjunct to social services and other welfare agencies and appearing in a variety of contexts, including services for older people at home, carers of young children and people experiencing mental health problems.

For example, national organisations like Age Concern and the Alzheimer’s Society are providing befriending services to those suffering from dementia. The Worcestershire Association for the Blind delivers befriending support to the blind and partially sighted whilst DISC (Developing Initiatives Supporting Communities) operating in the North East of England provides a highly successful befriending programme for adults with learning difficulties.

Befriending has been shown to:

- Increase users’ confidence in social situations
- Promote dissemination of information about services and more positive attitudes towards mental illness in the community
- Produce economic benefits through lowered hospitalisation and increased treatment compliance
- Reduce social isolation and improve social contact

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation also identified the following benefits:

- Increased use of local services and facilities
- Creating a new social link
- Developing wider social networks
- Meeting like-minded people
- Meeting people with similar needs and supporting each other
- Changing social attitudes so that users become accepted and valued as members of the community

Research shows that the voluntary nature of the relationship is crucial to successful outcomes as it is often more highly valued by those being befriended than relationships with professionals.

As a result of having a befriender I feel like a load has been lifted. Before I had correspondence that I just couldn’t deal with, even with a magnifying glass. Louise comes and helps me with everything. She reads my mail and helps me to work out what I need to keep and what I can recycle. I also receive a magazine from the BBC which gives a list of new talking books. Louise helps me by reading through the list and then circles the book which I would like to read.”

Befriendee, Age Concern North Yorkshire
Exploiting technology

The advent of technology, including the use of mobile phones, e-mail and the internet has led to new forms of befriending that have opened up fresh opportunities for both volunteers and those requiring services.

The RNIB Tele-Befriending scheme for people with sight loss demonstrates what can be achieved using a combination of technology and peer involvement.

Approximately 1.7 million people with sight problems (85%) are older people, aged over 65. Issues such as security, privacy, dignity, remaining independent and access to choice leave many of them feeling undervalued, isolated and distressed by the experience of ageing and disability.

RNIB Talk and Support provides weekly telephone social groups (Tele-Befriending) to adults with sight loss throughout the UK. The service is delivered using teleconferencing technology. Participants require only a landline telephone to access the service.

A network of approximately 90 volunteers (70% of whom have sight loss themselves) support the service as telephone group facilitators, administrators and participant care volunteers. Over the last 12 months, over 700 adults with sight loss have taken part in Tele-Befriending groups. The average age of those using the service is 70 years.

An independent study found that:

- Friendships formed within the virtual telephone group environment significantly expanded participants’ social horizons
- By sharing experiences and information within the groups, participants gained practical knowledge about sight loss aids and equipment
- Rather than being a barrier to friendship and social interaction, the telephone group environment demonstrated clear advantages in comparison to face-to-face contact for people with sight loss

Case study: ‘Learning new computer skills’

The Age Concern Kensington and Chelsea (incorporating Sixty Plus) Intergenerational Computer Project increases older people’s access to information and communication technologies using the skills and experience of young volunteers. The scheme organises weekly visits from young volunteers to isolated older people’s homes to provide tailored computer coaching.

Mr Hart is an older person who, until recently, used a typewriter for writing committee reports. He became involved with the project when his typewriter broke down. He bought a computer and needed help to use it.

Paul, a foreign student, was matched with Mr. Hart who used to lecture on architecture.

Paul says he volunteered for Age Concern Kensington and Chelsea because:

‘The main reason is that I was attracted by this contact with an older person. Being at university in a foreign country, it is not that easy to meet people other than students! I volunteered for this service because it benefits me as well.’

‘For me the most challenging aspect was to help Mr Hart in English. I am French and I’ve been in London only for a few months for my studies. I wasn’t totally confident with my language when we started the project.’

However, Mr Hart helped him with his pronunciation and Paul says: ‘I almost have a perfect English accent now thanks to Mr Hart!’

Mr Hart says:

‘Paul has been very patient and doesn’t get annoyed about it. Luckily the sessions have been very clear and logical. Paul has a great habit of helping me to write things down step-by-step.’

Project co-ordinator, Ben Long, explains:

‘Mr Hart and Paul have developed a hard working and committed relationship. Alongside their strong focus on achieving their learning goals, they have, over the course of their time together, increasingly taken an interest in each others’ lives outside of ‘the classroom.’

‘It’s given me a purpose. It’s given me something, living alone. During the week I think ‘I must remember to tell the group about that, I must remember to ask about this.’”

Befriendee, RNIB Talk and Support scheme
ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE ‘AT RISK’

Promoting active citizenship

TRANSFORMING LIVES
Diverse backgrounds

Mentors and befrienders come from various backgrounds and bring with them different expectations, experiences and skills. They can be young or old, peer mentors in schools or prisons in custody. They may be new migrants, people who are unemployed or workers sponsored by their employer.

For all of these groups, acting as a volunteer mentor or befriender can be a positive experience. It can raise aspirations, encourage personal growth and assist the development of practical and social skills. For many young people, it can lay the foundation for a lifetime of good citizenship.

‘Starting secondary school when you are only eleven years of age is scary. I hope that by being a good role model to younger kids they will go on to be peer mentors. I know dozens of other students who say that being a peer mentor changed them and gave them confidence to realise their potential.’

Sixth Form Peer Mentor, Saint John Plessington Catholic College

Lord Goldsmith’s review, ‘Citizenship: Our Common Bond’ (August 2008) argued that ‘Learning about the different elements of citizenship in the classroom is important but active participation is needed to build on that base and engage young people at an early stage’.

The Goldsmith Report recognises the valuable role that mentoring and befriending can play. It promotes the involvement of young people, employees and new migrants as a means of encouraging participation and promoting greater social cohesion. It also recommends the use of intergenerational mentoring as a solution to the ‘changing nature of connections between the generations’.

‘I became a volunteer because I wanted to relate more with my local community and felt that the older generation was a section of society I wouldn’t ordinarily interact with.’

Volunteer befriender, ‘Older Active People’ project

Acquiring important skills

The role of a mentor or befriender can be a mechanism for developing new skills, particularly the acquisition of ‘soft skills’.

For people who have been out of work for a long time, or who have never had a job, these ‘soft skills’ can make all the difference. Being a mentor or befriender encourages the development of personal skills, promotes independence and enables people to take the next step towards a work placement. It also demonstrates to a potential employer that the volunteer is capable of holding down a job.

‘Employers are looking for more than just technical skills and knowledge … They particularly value skills such as communication, team-working and problem solving. Job applicants who can demonstrate that they have developed these skills will have a real advantage.’

Lord Digby Jones, former Director-General, Confederation of British Industry

Rehabilitating offenders

Volunteer mentoring and befriending also has the potential to rehabilitate offenders. It can provide skills, a route to employment and learning, a sense of responsibility and a new role in society. It enables offenders to see themselves as helpers and givers, rather than just passive beneficiaries.

‘If it wasn’t for the peer adviser scheme I would have probably gone back to cheffing (being a chef), you know, but doing the peer adviser scheme I found another talent that I had and opened up a new career path and I think there should be more schemes in the prison like that, that can tap in and help develop the prisoners’ potentials.’

Volunteer Peer Adviser, St Giles Trust

Inspiring others

It is not only the individuals themselves that benefit. Volunteer mentors and befrienders can also motivate others, leading to positive changes amongst their peers, within their families and in their local communities. For example, the Osmani Trust recruits older members of the local community as mentors to act as positive role models for young people ‘at risk’.

‘We’re very proud of the fact that some of the mentees have gone on to become mentors themselves.’

Jobrul, Osmani Trust project manager
Conclusion
This report is based on the analysis of a number of mentoring and befriending schemes. Throughout we have tried to balance the use of quantifiable, statistical data with qualitative information that focuses on positive changes in individual lives including:

- Social life and networks
- Links to recovery and moving on – training and employment
- Expressed feelings of self-worth, self-confidence and self-esteem
- Skills and knowledge

Underpinning positive change

The results show the extent to which mentoring and befriending can improve outcomes for people with very different needs. They can change attitudes and behaviours across a wide spectrum of social issues. They are also contributing significantly to the achievement of important Government goals.

Mentoring and befriending can be applied successfully in a range of contexts. Both are at their most effective used alongside other measures and forms of support, especially when dealing with vulnerable groups.

The personalised support provided by a mentor or befriender can be critical in moving individuals, particularly those who are disengaged from society, to a point where they can take advantage of more formal provision.

All of the project evaluations report major improvements in service users’ self-confidence as a result of their mentoring or befriending experience. This is highly significant given the importance of improved self-confidence on other dimensions of users’ lives. As one of the projects highlighted:

‘An increase in overall confidence and motivation was the chief, and often life-changing, benefit of the most successful matches as confidence is a powerful asset in all areas of integration.’

Nor is it only the users of mentoring and befriending services who benefit. As the evidence from Chance UK shows, improving a child’s self-confidence and esteem can reduce family conflict and improve relationships at home as well as pressure on teachers.

Demonstrating good practice

The projects used in this report are difficult to compare and contrast because each of them is different, designed specifically to meet the needs of their particular target group. Nevertheless, there are certain features of good practice that can be highlighted:

- Mentoring and befriending relationships need to be well structured, with clear and attainable goals
- With few exceptions, relationships should take place over a lengthy period of time and involve frequent and regular contact
- Projects should be properly integrated into their organisational context and the role and services provided needs to be understood and valued by other relevant groups and support agencies
- For children at risk, there needs to be intensive supervision and support for each match, involving frequent contact with parents, referers and other support agencies
- For those in custody, projects should form part of an integrated package of measures and work closely with statutory and other voluntary services. There should be a recognition that prisoners themselves can contribute to rehabilitation and resettlement processes

Social return on investment

The estimated economic value of volunteering in the UK is in the region of £39 billion per year.

One of the most powerful ways to show the impact of mentoring and befriending is through their economic value. As well as improving the quality of life for vulnerable groups, many of the projects described in this study are delivering long term social and economic benefits.

- Reducing re-offending (the North Staffordshire, St Giles Trust and Pyramid projects)
- Reducing anti-social behaviour (Chance UK and the peer mentoring school programmes)
- Reducing the costs of community care (the RNIB Tele-Befriending project)

An early intervention mentoring or befriending programme can prevent the escalation of a problem that will eventually need to be dealt with at considerable greater expense.

The National Evaluation of Youth Justice Board Mentoring Schemes 2001-2004 concluded that if just one in ten young offenders could be prevented from re-offending through mentoring, the saving would be in the order of £100 million each year.

One of the evaluations used in this study provides hard evidence of the benefits that can be obtained from mentoring and befriending – and the results are striking.

The North Staffordshire mentoring project can point to a re-offending rate that is almost 40% below the national average. A cost benefit analysis based on the costs of re-imprisonment show potential savings of:

- £1.9m in terms of preventing 30 clients getting to the point of re-imprisonment
- £1m per year in terms of the costs of keeping the same number of clients in prison

This is not about getting public services on the cheap. Projects and the volunteers, who support them, require proper investment. However, agencies that invest in them can normally rest assured that they are getting value for money in terms of the services they receive. They will also be securing wider benefits for Government policy.

‘Over the last two years we have extensively evaluated the Peer Mentoring Programme. The evaluation has confirmed that the programme is value for money and supports a number of areas including attainment improvement, behaviour, anti-bullying measures and an easier transition between primary and secondary school.’

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98% of children referred show a reduction in their behavioural difficulty at the end of the mentoring year, with 51% no longer classed as having behavioural

Overall 71% of students mentored by adult volunteers met or overachieved their FFT GCSE scores. For Black and Ethnic Minority students the figure was even higher – 83% met or surpassed their target

Since 2002, over 98% of mentees involved in the scheme have accessed training or education

65% of offenders under the age of 25 said that having the support of a mentor would help them to stop re-offending

79% of the young people had improved mental health and reduced emotional problems as a result of the support

Key stats
MBF can...
...connect you with real life people to discuss the impact mentoring or befriending has made
...help you to understand how mentoring and befriending can meet your local or regional priorities
...support you to set up or develop a mentoring or befriending scheme
...can advise you on best practice and quality standards

About MBF

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) is the national strategic body for mentoring and befriending, offering support to practitioners and organisations operating in the field. We also work to influence policy and practice throughout the sector and across government.

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 already been developed. Our overriding aspiration is to build and extend best practice to ensure high quality mentoring and befriending services throughout the UK.

To find out how to access our support or join the growing community of mentoring and befriending enthusiasts and professionals contact us:

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