Conference Report

NATIONAL MENTORING PILOT PROJECT

THE CONTRIBUTION OF MENTORING TO RAISING ASPIRATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Third National Conference of School Coordinators

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AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE

- To provide an opportunity for an exchange of practice and experience between key project players
- To provide inputs about successful practice in order to stimulate incremental improvement in both process and structure within the project
- To identify key pointers for improvement in order to ensure the success of the project in each area
- To enable the National Coordinator, the Independent Evaluator, the Quality Assurance Manager and other project players to maintain an overview of the progress of the project towards the achievement of its goals

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO BRADFORD

Caroline Chambers

Project Director, Bradford University

Bernard Dady

Achievement Support Manager, Innovation and Development (National Strategies), Education Bradford; formerly Director, South Bradford EAZ

Caroline Chambers began by setting the context of the project in Bradford. It is based in the School of Lifelong Education and Development (formerly the Centre for Continuing Education), which is particularly concerned with initiatives for widening participation. The school is involved with university-wide compact schemes with local schools and colleges; it is looking (with South Bradford EAZ) at the concept of a 'family university'; and it runs higher education summer schools and other activities.

The school also runs a number of mentoring and tutoring schemes across the university. It joined the NMPP in April 2001, and in its first year appointed four university coordinators, overseeing a cohort of 40 student mentors attached to four schools in South Bradford EAZ. One of the schools has since withdrawn from the project but hopes to rejoin it when it has the necessary infrastructure in place. East Shipley EAZ, one of the smaller zones in Bradford, will be joining the project in September 2002, with one further school.

The student population in Bradford is very diverse. In 2001 the majority of applicants to the project were white; this year the majority of applicants are from ethnic minority groups. The student population reflects to an extent the (equally diverse) school population, and it has been possible to match mentors and mentees in terms of culture, gender and a whole range of backgrounds; this is one of the particular strengths of the project in Bradford.

Overall, the project has been a resounding success with the student mentors, and positive feedback has been received from them. The schools have also been extremely cooperative, and the school coordinators very committed to the project. They report a significant improvement in attendance and a slight improvement in attainment in pre-GCSE pupils.

As the project enters its second year the project team are seeking to develop it by improving their administrative procedures, as well as looking into web databases and website design with a view to simplifying the application process.

Bernard Dady focused on the South Bradford EAZ and its aspirations in relation to the project. He had been Director of the EAZ until May, but had since moved to Education Bradford, the new private-sector entity within the Bradford education service. His role as Achievement Support Manager was linked to and continued the work that had been started in the EAZ. As part of his role he would be managing the Excellence in Cities programmes in Bradford, and when the EAZ came to the end of its statutory life it would be assimilated into these programmes – a process that had already been initiated.

The city

Bradford is a very diverse city with a rich history based in textiles. Because of this history it has

been a centre for inward migration since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Irish migrants were followed by a whole range of different peoples from Europe, and, since the Second World War, by African Caribbeans and South-East Asians; the dominant group are of Pakistani origin. The city therefore has a long history of assimilating different peoples, the impact of which has been to create a very diverse cultural centre. Bradford is bidding to become the European Capital of Culture in 2008, and though its chances of success were originally rated very low it is currently placed fourth in the list of 14 contenders. This is attributable to the strength of the city's cultural base. The National Museum of Film, TV and Photography, which some participants had visited before the start of the conference, is the most visited museum outside London, and there are many other famous landmarks and institutions within the city.

Because of its diversity and long history, Bradford is also a city of extreme challenges. Some of its wards are amongst the poorest in the country, and some children come from very disrupted home and social environments, posing a great challenge to schools and teachers, This is reflected in Bradford's position in the national league tables, which has, in part, precipitated many of the changes to management and the provision of services in the city's education system, not least the setting up of the three EAZs. Bradford has experienced a typical pattern of post-industrial change, particularly the decline of employment in the textile industry and the emergence of work which demands skills. Employers are very clear about skills shortages and the need for schools to produce young people who are flexible learners, adaptive and equipped for employment in the 21st century.

The EAZ and the project schools

South Bradford EAZ comprises 20 schools: four secondary, three special, one early excellence centre and the remainder primary. All the schools were reorganised, one term into the life of the EAZ, from a three-tier to a two-tier system, and the zone has therefore been working out a period of change, assimilating new children and teachers into schools, with changes in management and – not least – much disruptive building work. The benefits of these changes are just beginning to be felt, with the recognition that middle-school teachers are an asset, not a problem, in secondary schools, because they understand the Key Stage 2 strategies. The new staff groupings are becoming a dynamic force for change within schools, with a new blend of thinking and ideas, and the change of school at 11 is beginning to reap benefits for the pupils, with the primary schools now able to take their pupils right through to the end of Key Stage 2 and secondary schools to take them over from the beginning of Key Stage 3.

The EAZ has a four-point agenda, which it has refined over the past two or three years:

1. **The interface between schools, communities and parents:** It is essential to effect change here if the long-term and deep-seated patterns of underachievement, poor motivation and unemployment are to be addressed. The cycle has to be broken at the level of the parent and the child.
2. **School-based actions to raise achievement:** Through their improvement plans schools have agendas which are very specific to each school, and the EAZ is trying to deploy resources to support the schools in actions which they feel they need to undertake to raise standards.
3. **Harnessing the expertise of professional staff in the EAZ:** As well as teachers there is a large body of learning mentors and teaching assistants, and administrative staff who are closely involved in the workings of the schools. The EAZ is seeking to build a professional development network whereby all the staff involved learn from each other, are able to adapt to the needs of their community and are empowered to make change.

4. **Learning in, around and beyond school:** It needs to be recognised that learning does not take place only within the confines of the timetabled school day, but in a variety of different settings. This is one aspect of the EAZ's partnership with the university.

Why the NMPP?

The EAZ recognises that teachers in Bradford cannot solve the problems of underachievement on their own, and that the best way forward is to harness the energy of the different partners in the community. In the case of the NMPP, the partner is the university and its students, who are being empowered by the project to make a difference in the community.

The EAZ is very pleased with the focus of the project on helping pupils to improve academic attainment, and on tackling the sort of problems that teachers know are a barrier to achievement in school and beyond: poor motivation, a lack of good role models, a poor working environment at home, and an inability to organise themselves effectively. The support and vision provided by the project and the mentors will help them to overcome these barriers and achieve at higher levels in their examinations.

The project also offers excellent opportunities for professional networking, with the sharing of both problems and successes, and the spreading of good practice from one school to another. The national framework of the project also enables Bradford's teachers to 'plug in' to the wider learning community.

Finally, the project helps to convince young people and their parents that higher education is a realistic possibility. The student mentors, from very diverse backgrounds, have made higher education a reality for themselves; this conveys a powerful message to their mentees and provides an example and role model for them to follow. Equally important are the concepts of learning in pairs and small groups, and of giving up one's own time to help others, which are central to the ethos of the project.

EFFECTIVE INNOVATION STRATEGIES: THE CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Chair: Phil Green

Director of Education, Bradford

In his introductory remarks Phil Green spoke of his long attachment to mentoring; he had spent two years coordinating a large project involving 20 European cities, which was concerned with supporting children from disadvantaged and ethnic minority backgrounds. It included mentoring schemes for recently arrived young people in places as diverse as Madrid and Helsinki; in the latter, memorably, Black African mentors had worked with recently arrived children from central Africa, many of whom had been abandoned by their fathers and had very little support. He was also very interested in learning mentors and the development of this scheme under Excellence in Cities; this had been the first element of that programme to have an obvious and immediate impact on the attendance, attitudes and motivation of young people in schools, with extremely positive feedback from those involved.

The Bradford district is fortunate to have a number of very active community groups. The African Caribbean population of Bradford is very small (under a thousand school pupils), but the education authority works with an outstanding community organisation, the African Caribbean Achievement Project (ACAP), whose members spend many hours as volunteers working with young people from this community, with very positive results. The NMPP is another extremely valuable initiative which has succeeded in really engaging all those involved.

An important part of Phil Green's role is to watch over, support and challenge Education Bradford (which is contracted to deliver the authority's services) as it seeks to ensure that the targets it has set for attendance and attainment are achieved. These targets are very challenging: Education Bradford has stated publicly that within 10 years Bradford will be the highest achieving city in the UK. A particularly important aspect of this ambition is to narrow the achievement gap in a range of areas, not least the low participation rate in post-16 and in further and higher education.

Sid Slater

Senior Adviser, Standards and Effectiveness Unit, DfES

Sid Slater began by explaining his role at the DfES. He works with a number of LEAs in Yorkshire and Humberside, including Bradford, and some in the north-west, in a support and challenge role; he also has a policy remit and most recently has been involved with the development of the 14–19 Green Paper. One of his main areas of work has been developing policies and providing support in relation to underachieving groups.

His speech focused on raising attainment and achievement, with the key theme of 'Children: their learning and success'. He asked participants to think about a child starting secondary school at the age of 11, and to consider, if they could guarantee only one thing for that child by the time he or she left school, what that one thing would be. Various ideas were put forward, including a positive learning experience, curiosity, literacy, citizenship, to be an independent learner, self-belief, creativity, enjoyment, awareness. Sid Slater's own choice was improved life chances; this, and all the other choices, were essentially about children's success.

Within the context of his key theme, he considered three main topics:

1. Achievements to date: the main findings of the Ofsted inspection reports
2. Government support and challenge
3. School improvement and innovation.

Achievements to date: the main findings of the Ofsted inspection reports

Sid Slater highlighted the key findings of the 2002 HMCI reports for primary and secondary schools.

Primary schools

- Many aspects of primary education have again shown some improvement this year, but in some key areas there has been little or no measurable progress.
- There has been a pause in the upward trend of pupils achieving level 4 in English and mathematics, but a continuing rise in science. The gap between the attainment of girls and boys in English at the age of 11 has increased.
- The greatest improvement in achievement has been in information and communications technology, but this remains unsatisfactory in just over a quarter of schools. Pupils' achievement in geography and design and technology gives cause for concern.

Teaching quality

- The proportion of unsatisfactory or poor teaching observed in Section 10 inspections is the lowest it has ever been at fewer than 1 lesson in 25.
- Headteachers and senior staff are better at analysing and responding to assessment data, but the setting of curricular targets remains weak.

Under-fives in maintained schools

- The quality of teaching in nursery and reception classes remains a strength.
- The majority of reception class teachers demonstrate a good understanding of what to teach and how to teach it in ways that engage the interest of young children.

Management and efficiency

- The quality of leadership and management of primary schools improved last year despite changing demands on schools.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching have improved considerably since last year, but remain weak in 1 in 4 schools.
- Few schools analyse pupils' performance in terms of gender, ethnicity or other groupings of pupils.
- Individual curricular targets are often set for pupils, but they tend to be too general and are consequently of little value to teachers planning work.

Before moving on to consider Ofsted's findings for secondary schools, Sid Slater quoted the following (abridged) comment from a speech by the former Secretary of State, David Blunkett:

> Based on OECD evidence, the UK is one of the biggest class divides in education in the industrial world. The gap in attainment becomes evident as early as 22 months, and is wider at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 1. By the age of 18 the son of daughter of low-income parents is nearly three times less likely to go to university than the child of professional parents, and half as likely to get five good GCSEs.

He asked participants to consider whether they tracked this attainment gap in their own schools.

Secondary schools

Pupil attainment and behaviour

- Some aspects of secondary education have improved, but there remains a wide variation in attainment of pupils in different schools.
- The achievement of pupils has risen but too many pupils do not make enough progress at KS3.
- Pupil achievement and progress across both key stages are now satisfactory or better in 9 out of 10 schools.
- Progress is not uniform across different groups of pupils: boys, some ethnic minority pupils and children in care do less well.
- Behaviour is good or better in 75 per cent of schools, unsatisfactory in 1 in 12 schools.

Management and efficiency

- Leadership and management continues to improve, now good or better in 74 per cent of schools (1 school in 20 unsatisfactory).
- Monitoring and evaluation of schools' performance is good or better in over 50 per cent of schools, unsatisfactory in 1 in 6 schools.
- Almost two-thirds of schools provide good or better value for money.

Teaching quality

There has been an overall improvement:

- At KS3: good or better in 75 per cent of lessons observed
- At KS4: good or better in 80 per cent of lessons observed
- Unsatisfactory in just under 1 lesson in 20 observed.

Higher levels of teaching quality were observed in schools with lower numbers of pupils receiving free school meals.

Excellence in Cities

- There has been a slow start but progress in most EIC strands is good.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils has improved.
- The work of learning mentors is particularly encouraging.
- Learning support units are generally working well.

A national evaluation of Excellence in Cities has been started; initial findings relating to **learning mentors**, as reported by coordinators of pilot projects, are that

- Learning mentors in primary schools are successful in all or most partnerships.
- The work of learning mentors focuses on study support, clubs, attendance and punctuality, behaviour management, self-esteem, and one-to-one tutoring linked to the curriculum.
- The challenge for schools is the coordination of the work of learning mentors within school structures.

Government support and challenge

Raising standards

The Government's approach to raising standards (as outlined by David Blunkett in January 2000) has four key elements:

- **laying firm foundations** in the primary school – which includes initiatives such as the national literacy and numeracy strategies and Sure Start – and building on them right through to secondary school
- **improving all schools**, with schools, LEAs and the DfES working together in partnership to achieve improvement
- **a drive for inclusion**, with the aim of ensuring that all children are successful, and that underachieving groups are targeted and included in measures to improve attainment and achieve success
- **modernising comprehensive education**.

The White Paper 2001

The key targets for the school system set out in the White Paper *Schools: Achieving Success* are:

- high national standards for all
- a much more diverse system, with different sorts of schools (including specialist schools and beacon schools)
- greater flexibility and autonomy
- support for teachers, headteachers and all who work in schools
- building on success in primary schools
- transforming secondary education (a strand which is followed through in the 12–19 Green Paper).

As the White Paper states:

> We need to hold on to values and principles that underpin our commitment to comprehensive education – that every child is special and that all children should have the opportunity and support to develop their skills and ability to achieve their full potential – but apply them in a way that is appropriate to a 21st century world.

Informed prescription and professionalism

The Standards and Effectiveness Unit, under its new Head, David Hopkins, is currently in the early stages of thinking about informed prescription and professionalism, and how they might be integrated. We now know more (as individual teachers, as LEAs and at a national level) about what is going on in the education system than we did 10, 15 or 20 years ago: this is what is meant by informed professionalism. We know more about who is failing and who is succeeding; LEAs are now tracking groups that are underachieving and have collected data about them, and this data

is also available on a national database.

It has been said that at any one moment, there is a school solving a problem that is currently an issue of general concern; we need to be able to identify, understand and make use of each of these schools' experiences. The task of the new Innovation Unit of the DfES will be to gather information from schools and LEAs about strategies that are working, and to disseminate them.

The question of how informed prescription (requiring schools to do something in a certain way) fits with informed professionalism is currently under debate. If the measures outlined in the Green and White Papers are enshrined in legislation there will be more flexibility for schools that are succeeding; however, where schools are not succeeding there will be a measure of intervention and prescription.

School improvement and innovation

The following points, based on the findings of the Ofsted reports, offer ideas for strategies to be used, both by teachers, schools and LEAs and by the DfES, working in partnership, to achieve school improvement and innovation in a context of informed professionalism.

- Developing the capacity for robust self-review
- Tackling the blockages to improvement
- Working with critical friends (the LEA, other schools)
- Looking at innovation and diversity, to see what works elsewhere
- Branding and consolidating success
- Disseminating best practice
- Planning for sustainability
- Sorting and managing information
- Using data and information for targeting the effort to raise standards
- Improving the management and implementation of plans
- Building synergy with other key plans in the local community – especially those for regeneration and social inclusion
- Building pathways for children to social and educational inclusion
- Creating a high profile for using the views of children and parents to improve schools
- Developing new partnerships to release energy into improvement
- Developing school leadership teams – high-visibility 'champions for change'
- Ensuring constant feedback and development
- Using CPD and professional networks to support and motivate staff

In conclusion, Sid Slater quoted David Blunkett's aspiration for the education system, expressed in March 2000:

> We need to establish an excellent and diverse education system where schools work together; where schools learn from each other; where good practice and ideas are shared rapidly; where pupils are part of a wider learning community – with the school at its heart but where learning doesn't stop at the school gates.

MENTORING AND EVALUATION: MESSAGES FROM THE INTERIM EVALUATION STUDY

Dr Prue Huddleston

Director of the Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick, and leader of the NMPP evaluation team

Prue Huddleston's address was based on the key findings of the Interim Evaluation Report of April 2002, and as such gave a flavour of 'the story so far'. She and her colleagues in the independent evaluation team at Warwick University had been involved in the project from the start, and had been collecting data from a wide range of sources. The team welcomed input from schools, and were particularly keen to receive copies of schools' own evaluation reports to supplement the data they obtained from the study, which, because of the size of the project, was limited to a sample of seven higher education institutions and their associated schools.

Methodology

Evaluation instruments used in the study include:

- a survey of literature provided by the Cardiff team including, publicity, information, training materials, reports, participation statistics
- interviews with a sample of EAZ directors, university project directors, university coordinators and school coordinators
- interviews with a sample of mentors and mentees before and after their mentoring experience
- observation of a sample of awareness-raising sessions and training sessions.
- attendance at annual conferences.

A large amount of data has now been collected and is being analysed. The 'before and after' perspective in relation to both mentors and mentees is a particularly important aspect of the study. The methodology has been both qualitative and quantitative; the qualitative evidence obtained (from interviews) has been extremely rich, but it has been more difficult to collect quantitative evidence – hard data to show that mentoring has had a direct impact on achievement. The team are very mindful of the difficulties faced by schools in collecting such data, and are grappling with the issues.

Findings

The mentors

Mentor motivation

The following responses were given by mentors when they were asked, at the outset, their reasons for wanting to become a mentor.

- I wanted to help young people 87%
- I think it will be useful for my future career development 82%
- I want to help disadvantaged young people 74%
- I wanted to improve my counselling/mentoring skills 63%
- I wanted to gain insight into young people's attitudes and opinions 46%
- I was attracted by the payment 24%

- It is relevant to a course I am doing 23%
- My tutor asked for volunteers 6%
- I have good/existing links with the school 3%
- Other 8%

In the post-mentoring interviews many mentors confirmed that 'useful for my future career development' – the second most popular reason given – had indeed been a key benefit of the mentoring experience for them.

Who are the mentors?

Of the sample of mentors surveyed over the three years of the project, about 75 per cent are female. The overwhelming majority (87 per cent) are undergraduates between 18 and 21 years of age. Most mentors are in the first or second year of their course, with numbers diminishing significantly in the third year.

Training

The majority of students are extremely satisfied with the quality of the awareness-raising and initial training sessions provided. The top-up training, introduced in response to requests from mentors for further support as they become more familiar with what their role involves, has been equally well received

The schools

How pupils are selected for mentoring

A wide range of responses have been received from school coordinators. The sample includes a wide variety of ages and year groups, and schools are using mentoring for a number of different purposes, including improving pupils' target setting, action planning and study skills, and (in some cases) specific GCSE work. The variety stems from the fact that schools are focusing on the specific needs of their pupils in deciding who to select for mentoring and identifying what they hope they will gain from it.

Matching

Matching of mentors to mentees is seen as crucial to the whole process. In the early stages of the project the matching process gave some cause for concern, but in the course of the evaluation study there has been a significant improvement in this respect. The most successful results are achieved when university and school coordinators meet to decide the best match for each mentor and mentee.

Role of the school coordinator

This role has been undertaken by a wide variety of individuals within the sample schools. In the most successful cases the role has been filled by a senior member of staff, sometimes a deputy headteacher, who is able to give the level of support and commitment required of the project. Where this has not been the case, or where the role has been reluctantly assumed by a member of staff, the process has not been a smooth one. A recent development is that in some schools learning mentors have taken on the school coordinator role, and are responsible for coordinating the whole range of mentoring activities within the school, not just the NMPP.

Roles, responsibilities and logistics

In the early days of the project practical considerations, often straightforward details involving

communication with mentors/mentees, or accommodation, sometimes caused considerable problems and irritation. Once these details were ironed out, and all those involved (in both schools and universities) became more aware of their respective roles and responsibilities, the project was able to run more smoothly. Email has been extremely useful as a means of communication, for example in informing mentors of pupils' absence.

Purposes and benefits of the mentoring programme

Mentors' perspectives

Mentors gave the following responses when asked 'What do you understand as the main purpose for the school pupil of the mentoring programme?':

- To increase self-esteem and confidence 92%
- To improve motivation to learn 90%
- To improve study skills 83%
- To improve personal and social skills 82%
- To improve GCSE coursework and exam grades 80%
- To act as a role model for pupils 58%
- To improve behaviour 37%
- To give guidance on careers and further/higher education 35%
- To improve skills wanted by employers 26%
- Other 4%

Mentees' perspectives

When asked a similar question mentees responded as follows:

- To improve GCSE coursework and exam grades 69%
- To improve personal and social skills 45%
- To improve study skills 45%
- To support work in particular GCSE subjects 43%
- To increase self-esteem and self-confidence 37%
- To give guidance on careers and further/higher education 33%
- To improve behaviour 24%
- To improve your wish to learn 20%
- To improve skills wanted by employers 10%
- Other 6%

Clearly, mentors and mentees have different priorities but generally common perspectives on the purpose of the programme.

Selection of pupils

Mentees were asked why they thought they had been selected for mentoring:

- I want to improve my GCSE exam results 59%
- I volunteered 47%
- I want to improve my coursework grades 37%
- I need help with study skills 31%
- I am interested in further/higher education 22%
- I don't know 14%
- I was not doing well in my GCSEs 12%
- I was often away or late for school 6%

- I had lost interest in school 6%
- I need help finding a job I like 2%
- Other 8%

A new development this year is that pupils in some schools have asked to be given a mentor. There is very little evidence of pupils or parents refusing a mentor when offered (only 2 per cent of cases); likewise only a small number of pupils in the sample have dropped out of the programme.

When asked to list the three most important things that they hoped to gain from mentoring, pupils listed the following, showing that improving their academic work is overwhelmingly the most important factor:

- improved academic work 74%
- personal development 21%
- someone to talk to 17%
- building self-confidence 13%
- careers and education advice 12%

What happens in mentoring sessions?

The topics most commonly discussed at every, or almost every, meeting are (in order of priority):

- reviewing targets set by mentors
- progress in GCSE subjects (dependent upon age of mentee)
- general progress in school
- problems in school, for example bullying, relationships
- future education and training
- general interests and hobbies.

These findings align closely with the overall objectives of the project.

Asked to rate their relationship with their mentor, 86 per cent of pupils rated it as excellent or good; in some schools the figure was 100 per cent. There are very few examples of poor mentor/mentee relationships; these tend to reflect a lack of common interests.

Benefits of the mentoring programme for mentors

The most beneficial aspects of the mentoring programme were reported by mentors as:

- helping young people 99%
- gaining an insight into young people's attitudes/opinions 99%
- enhancing my CV 84%
- obtaining accredited mentor training 67%
- helping disadvantaged young people 50%

The mentors were invited to comment on up to two learning goals that they had at the beginning of the programme; these fell into both personal (e.g. 'improve my self confidence') and professional (e.g. 'work with pupils') categories. All felt that these goals had been met to a great or considerable extent. These are some typical comments:

- 'I feel I have learnt more about children and social problems.'
- 'I feel more confident.'
- 'The mentoring scheme helped greatly.'

- ‘I want to go into teaching.’

Achievement of mentees’ personal goals

Pupils were asked to indicate how far the mentoring programme had helped them to achieve any of the purposes of mentoring. They were asked to rate each of nine purposes on a scale of 1 (achieved to a ‘great extent’) to 5 (achieved to a ‘very limited extent’).

- Improved GCSE coursework and exam grades 1.75
- Supported work in particular GCSE subjects 2.00
- Given guidance on careers and further education 2.17
- Improved personal and social skills 2.42
- Improved study skills 2.42
- Increased self-esteem and confidence 2.75
- Improved your wish to learn 3.33
- Improved skills wanted by employers 3.42
- Improved behaviour 4.33

Conclusions

These are the main conclusions of the interim evaluation report:

- The NMPP is building on and developing the good work begun in the early stages of the programme and there continues to be overwhelming support and enthusiasm for it from mentors, mentees and schools.
- Improvements to the training and support of mentors, in the light of feedback received from earlier evaluations, have been made by the Cardiff team. These include a video, ‘top up’ training materials and *The Mentor* newsletter.
- There is evidence of improved communications between schools and university partners, mainly as a result of improved systems and designated personnel.
- Institutions joining the programme in its later phases have been able to benefit from the experience of the earlier programme members, and have been keen to do so.
- Outcomes are overwhelmingly measured in motivational and attitudinal terms for mentees and there is little hard evidence available to date of improved pupil attainment, although a few schools have made efforts to collect it. Nevertheless, evidence collected from the face-to-face interviews with pupils does provide some ‘self-reporting’ of improvement in coursework grades.
- Schools appear to differ in their perspectives of the scheme’s function and, therefore, may be seeking different outcomes. It is consequently difficult to establish common baseline data, although the evaluation team has collected a substantial amount of qualitative baseline data in its sample sites and has followed this up with post-mentoring surveys.
- Where local evaluations are in progress these can enrich the data being collected by the national evaluators. Local evaluators are urged to make these local reports available to the national team in order to expand the evidence base. The national team’s resource has only permitted a sample of participating institutions to be surveyed.
- The national team has already made some of its research instruments available to other schools and universities for their local use, but it does not have the resources to undertake the data analysis. The team would greatly appreciate receiving copies of local evaluation reports.

- School coordinator interviews have yielded helpful insights into pupil outcomes, although not always in terms of attainment. This process will continue and, in the final phase, strenuous attempts will be made to enlist the help of schools in focusing on the question of attainment. This will involve the briefing of school coordinators on the purpose, function and methods of data collection required in order to attempt to track pupils' achievement over time.

The purpose of programme evaluation is to assess achievement against the objectives set for it. It is suggested that at this stage of the evaluation the following progress has been made against the objectives identified above.

Mentees' objectives	**Progress towards achievement**
• Improve academic achievement at GCSE/GNVQ/NVQ	• Insufficient quantitative data, but strategies are being put in place to attempt to measure this; some positive self-reporting
• Draw up and implement individual learning and action plans	• Significant progress
• Acquire and develop study skills	• Significant progress
• Increase self-esteem, motivation, confidence and application	• Significant progress
• Develop greater awareness of opportunities offered by higher education	• Some progress
• Recognise that access to higher education is possible and affordable	• Some progress although issues of finance are not usually covered
• Prepare for the world of work	• Not usually a focus of mentor/mentee sessions although the development of generic skills clearly has related benefits for employment
Mentors' objectives	**Progress towards achievement**
• Experience the satisfaction of helping young people to develop and achieve their goals	• Significant progress
• Participate in valuable training and development activities	• Achieved
• Develop skills and experience which will contribute to their personal effectiveness	• Significant progress
• Benefit from regular support and feedback from other mentors, their university coordinator and other professionals	• Uneven achievement, dependent upon institutions
• Use the experience on their CVs, to enhance their career prospects	• Significant progress

CASE STUDY 1

HEDWORTHFIELD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL: COLLECTING AND EVALUATING DATA ABOUT MENTORING

David Glenn

School Coordinator, Hedworthfield Comprehensive School, South Tyneside EAZ

Hedworthfield Comprehensive is a small school with about 520 pupils, and is due to be amalgamated with a bigger school in two or three years' time. The mentoring scheme has been in operation for about three years, since the start of the project; it has improved considerably over that period, and our internal evaluation suggests that it is very successful – a view supported by the EAZ.

At the start of the project the EAZ asked me to draw up a document setting targets for the mentoring and outlining how those targets were to be evaluated. Some of the targets have proved, in the light of three years' experience, to be totally inappropriate (e.g. compliance with school uniform, the number of behavioural referrals, exclusion rates); there is no point in collecting data on such 'soft', qualitative factors.

How the mentoring scheme operates in the school

- Photos of the 12 mentors are displayed in the school entrance hall, next to photos of the staff, to make it clear to pupils that the mentors are members of staff, albeit part-time and younger than the other staff. The photos also make it clear to that staff that the mentors are their colleagues, and they are treated with more respect and consideration as a result.
- Mentoring is timetabled in a four-hour block, with one session in the lunch hour, two in afternoon lesson slots, and one after school. The sessions are rotated so that pupils do not miss the same lesson every week.
- Accommodation has been a problem in the past, with mentoring taking place in unsuitable locations. Recently I booked the school's Learning Resource Centre for two afternoons a week, and I have also arranged for a separate mentoring room, furnished through Employability Skills money (appropriately, as mentoring ties in closely with Employability Skills) to be available for priority use by mentors. Decent accommodation is essential, not only for the actual mentoring but also to give mentors an extra degree of credibility and prestige.
- I have regular meetings with the mentors, and get verbal reports from them, but I also insist on the university sending me copies (sometimes edited) of the written reports sent to the university coordinators by the mentors. There is some concern on the university side about confidentiality, but I need to see the reports in order to write references for the mentors and to know how well they are working with the pupils.
- I keep a register for mentors to sign and indicate whether mentees have attended or missed a session. If I find that a pupil has missed more than one or two sessions I will go and see them and will withdraw them from mentoring if appropriate. I have a waiting list of 20 pupils in Year 11 who would like to have a mentor; all the pupils who do have one are made to feel privileged, and I will pull them out of the scheme immediately if they miss sessions without a very good reason.

Evaluation: issues to be considered

What you should be measuring

It is difficult to decide what should be measured in a school:

- It depends on **who** wants the information: the content of the evaluation will be coloured by who it is intended for.
- It depends on **why** your mentees were selected (e.g. they are gifted and talented, or they have moved from another school, where they were underachieving). Why should you evaluate something which isn't relevant to the situation of that particular pupil? You can only evaluate them as a whole group if they have all been put on the mentoring scheme for the same reason: if there are a variety of reasons perhaps there should be a variety of methods of evaluation.
- Some things are too **difficult**, or too time-consuming, to measure.

Who wants to know?

1. The **EAZ** is accountable to government, and needs to be able to show that resources have been spent wisely and that the scheme is making a real difference.
2. **School coordinators** have several reasons for wanting evaluation data:
   - to give the scheme credibility with the rest of the staff, showing them that the scheme works, and that pulling pupils out of lessons (which can cause a lot of resentment among staff) is not a waste of time
   - to secure the continuation of the scheme and the funding for it; if it can be shown to be working, school coordinators will have a much better chance of extending it and (for example) obtaining new furniture and facilities for it
   - to enhance their own careers: if they can show that a scheme they have been associated with has worked well they can use this information in their job applications and to enhance their prospects within their own school
   - to be able to target the right pupils for the scheme next year, i.e. the same sort of pupils who have most benefited from the scheme this year.
3. **Mentors** need to know that they are doing a good job and are making a difference, and they too can use this information on their CVs.
4. **Parents** may be worried about the consequences of removing their child from lessons, and it will calm their fears if they can be shown evidence that the scheme has worked in previous years.
5. The **NMPP** team at Cardiff University needs to see the results of school evaluations.

What to measure and why

There are many problems involved in deciding what to evaluate:

- **Unquantifiable results:** For example, a mentor has succeeded in averting a suicide, or persuading a runaway pupil to stay at home. The mentors I have this year have apparently sorted out four major social problems with the pupils they are mentoring; any one of these would have justified the whole of the mentoring scheme for the year, but it is impossible to evaluate such cases in terms of hard data.
- **Mix of reasons for mentoring:** For some pupils it might be poor attendance, for other poor revision skills. How do you decide which of these to evaluate? Moreover, there might (for

example) be only two pupils in a group with an attendance problem, and any changes in the attendance rate will skew the results to such an extent as to make them meaningless.

- **Lack of time:** There are only 24 hours in the day, and preparing questionnaires and analysing the results is too time-consuming.
- **Lack of a control group:** In our school we give mentors to all C/D borderline pupils in a year group: who can we compare them with to see if mentoring has made a difference? There can be no control group. All we can do is compare their results with their predicted grades.
- **Other initiatives:** Many pupils are also involved in other schemes to boost their achievement: how can you isolate the effect that mentoring has had?
- **Group too small for results to be statistically significant:** I split the mentoring in our school between Year 10 and Year 11, with roughly 24 pupils in each group. How can results be statistically significant with such a small group? If just two pupils fail to sit their exams for some reason the percentage of A–C grades achieved can drop, even though some of the other pupils might have performed much better than predicted. However, if the analysis you present to parents shows no obvious improvement you can point out that the results are statistically insignificant.

Collecting evaluation data

In the light of all these problems, we might ask why should we bother to collect evaluation data, but given that (as discussed above) the information is needed by various parties, how should we set about collecting the data and publicising the results? Some general guidelines:

- Keep the evaluation simple, authoritative and positive.
- Be honest, but make the 'woolliness' of the results work for you.
- Produce one report that suits everyone.
- Publish it far and wide.

Selecting the pupils to be mentored

At Hedworthfield, in the first instance I use the KS2 results, the CAT tests and the KS3 results (from YELLIS) to determine which pupils are underachieving. I then have a meeting with the headteacher and the head of year for that group, in which we consider the personalities of those pupils and choose the ones who we think will respond to mentoring and have a reasonable chance of achieving five or more grade C GCSEs. Initially we select those with a 20–40 per cent chance of achieving these grades, and I have found that mentoring produces the best results with those in the lower half of the 40 per cent band. In 2001 few or none of the pupils in the 0–20 per cent band succeeded in gaining five or more grade Cs after mentoring.

However, simply looking at the grade C results is unfair, in that some pupils improved their predicted grades from Es or Fs to Ds; mentoring has clearly been very valuable for them, but the results don't show up on this system of measuring. It is important to make this point in your evaluation report, so that other staff and parents are aware that the mentoring has been useful, and to take it into account when you select the next cohort of pupils.

Pupils might be selected for mentoring because of underachievement in one specific subject (e.g. science), and quantitative data can be gathered for that subject using YELLIS predictions; it is not necessary to look at the whole range of subjects The problem is that there might be only one or two pupils who fit into this category.

What do you want to measure?

The following are some of the criteria against which the success of mentoring can be measured; it is up to you to decide which of these you wish to measure in your school and for each individual pupil, given their particular circumstances.

- Compliance with school uniform
- Exam results compared with predicted grades
- Mentee satisfaction
- Drop-out rates from mentoring: whether a pupil dropped out during the year or when given the choice to continue with mentoring from Year 10 to Year 11
- Parent satisfaction
- Length of waiting list for mentoring (a measure of the scheme's popularity)
- Exam performance compared with that of previous years
- League tables
- Punctuality and attendance
- Recorded behavioural incidents
- Homework or coursework handed in (very difficult to measure)

CASE STUDY 2

STAUNTON PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Ian Wright

School Coordinator, Staunton Park Community School, Leigh Park EAZ

The context

Leigh Park is a large council estate, 10 miles from Portsmouth, built in the immediate aftermath of World War II to house the people of Portsmouth bombed out by the Luftwaffe. An old pamphlet exists in the EAZ office called 'Leigh Park – Garden City of the South'. This gives an indication of the optimistic beginnings of the estate. Sadly, as with so much post-war housing development, the dream has died.

The effect of the development has been to create a very insular community. Leigh Park is surrounded by physical barriers on all four sides. On two sides is the railway line, a third is bounded by the A3M motorway and on the fourth is the natural hill that Staunton Park sits atop. However, the invisible force field that exists and limits ambition and aspiration is a much greater barrier and far more difficult to surmount.

There is little history of academic success, which has been seen as something that belongs to children from the many affluent suburbs that surround Leigh Park, not to Leigh Parkers. Levels of deprivation are high, among some of the worst in the country, and the estate's setting as an island amid a sea of comfort makes the relative poverty a particular issue.

Staunton Park is one of two relatively small secondary schools that serve the estate. At one time the estate sustained four large secondary schools, a graphic indication of the area's decline.

How the scheme operates in the school

I coordinate the scheme. I am Assistant Headteacher and sit on the senior management team. This is seen as a vital factor both in setting a context for the importance of the NMPP and for allowing the project to be something that has priority. I am also a volunteer, which means that I work from the basis of believing in the concept and therefore do all I can to make it a success. The scheme also has the support of the headteacher and the senior management team as a whole. We have targeted pupils in Year 10, believing that they will be able to become successful learners and take these study skills with them into Year 11, and then cascade some of these ideas down the school. We also have to be aware of our less than lofty position in the county league tables, and if the NMPP can help us to crack the 25 per cent barrier (i.e. GCSE A*–C), we will have done a lot to shift the culture of the pupils.

The scheme has operated as an after-school activity. Typically, mentors will arrive twice weekly, do two one-hour sessions per visit and so mentor four mentees. No mentee is forced to participate. Mentoring is offered to a cohort of pupils, who then opt to join the scheme, some entirely independently, some with the support of parents. The pupils in the cohort are not selected according to whether their predicted GCSE grades are on the C/D borderline, but because they are either perceived to be underachieving or they are working really hard and deserve extra support.

Successes

- **Matching:** Our record of success is very good. To date, no mentor/mentee pairing has had to be changed because the match is unsuccessful. The key to this is that I always attend the training of mentors so that I get to work alongside them. This means that at the matching meeting with the university I know the individuals as more than names on a form.
- **Attendance at training:** As indicated above, my attendance is crucial to the matching; it also makes me more approachable to the mentors and demonstrates that the school has made public our commitment to the scheme.
- **Initial meeting:** We are very proud of the consistent success of the first mentoring meeting. The basic format is that the mentors arrive at the school for the afternoon, when they are given their briefing about the school; then, at the end of the school day, the mentors move to the hall where the mentees are waiting. The groups of four mentees are introduced to their mentors, and the mentees then take their mentors on a tour of the school. This means that the mentees are on home ground and will be able to speak first on a topic at which they are expert. On return to the hall, refreshments are waiting and chairs and tables are arranged, café style, giving the mentors and mentees the opportunity to chat informally before the mentors board their minibus to take them back to the university.
- **Support of the headteacher:** This is unfailing and unquestioned. I have the headteacher's trust to make my own decisions about how best to operate the scheme and when to take time off. His support also gives the lead to all staff about the importance we attach to the NMPP.
- **Support of senior management:** This sends equally positive messages to staff and pupils about the NMPP.
- **Availability of funding/EAZ support:** This enables the project to take place and to be a quality operation. It provides the wherewithal to adopt new and flexible arrangements that may require financial support. The EAZ director also supports the parents' evening.
- **Links to the national project office at Cardiff University:** These are strong and provide important support whenever needed.
- **Excellent relationships when it works well:** This is the crux. When relationships work and the commitment is there on both sides, mentoring really provides a level of quality sustained support that no other scheme that I have experienced has been able to match.
- **Two-way support:** For example, in the last year two of our mentors have based their final research thesis on the school. As well as cementing the relationship with the school as an institution, this will provide useful information about the pupil population.
- **Support from staff:** This provides a welcoming atmosphere for all mentors. They are always spoken to when they are waiting for meetings and when mentees have not turned up. They will be offered coffee. Staff are always willing to provide rooms for meetings to take place.
- **Accommodation:** As mentoring takes place after school, there are always rooms available.
- **Parents' evening:** Support from the university project director, EAZ director and headteacher makes this a good event. Personalised invitations to parents produce a better than average turnout. Only one parent in the past two years has said that they do not want their child on the scheme.

Problems

- **Communication:** Getting messages across in any direction and between any two people in the whole mentoring web can be very problematic.
- **School and university student drop-out**
- **Non-attendance at meetings:** There is nothing more frustrating for anybody than turning up for a meeting that the other person fails to attend.
- **Not meeting the recruitment quota:** The university has not been able to fulfil its full quota in the first two years.
- **Fall-off in enthusiasm and interest:** This seems to take place during the dark winter months after the energy stimulated by the newness of mentoring has dissipated.
- **Transport:** The 10-mile distance between the university and the school creates severe problems. The public transport system is dismal and the university has had problems with the minibus arrangements.
- **Different term times (linked to university exams):** This is a key factor in the fall-off in enthusiasm. There is in most cases a six-week hiatus in mentoring around Christmas.
- **Evaluation of success:** This is something that I need to develop. Because of the principle of confidentiality (which is clearly working!) I have only limited knowledge of what has gone on.

Solutions being used/trialled

- **Signing of contract:** To reduce the drop-out rate of mentees, each will sign a commitment to stick to mentoring throughout its course.
- **Greater parental commitment:** Parents will also be asked to agree to mentoring and not take the mentees away (e.g. to shop for uniform) when they should be in a mentoring session.
- **Some release of lesson time/once a week visit only:** To tackle the transport and non-attendance issues, we are looking at a new model of mentoring: one afternoon a week, when each mentor will see four mentees during the last two lessons of the day and two after-school sessions. Pupils will attend on a rota basis and so should not miss more than one lesson in one subject each fortnight.
- **Ever more careful selection:** This involves greater liaison with tutors and the head of year to reduce the drop-out rate.
- **Two-mentee commitment for some mentors:** We tried this out this year as the alternative was to lose our best mentor. As a final-year undergraduate she did not feel she could mentor four students. It was an easy decision: two hours' quality mentoring or none!
- **Improved pupil attendance = fewer fruitless journeys:** As well as signing the contract, all mentees receive a reminder on the afternoon of their mentoring sessions.
- **Extension of scheme to other HE institutions:** To overcome the under-recruitment problem we have taken the NMPP to a local college running degree-level courses and to a second university campus.
- **Subject-specific talks:** We know that some subjects are more fruitful in mentor-recruitment terms and we have targeted them more specifically.

- **School coordinator talks:** I have spoken personally about the NMPP to various groups of pupils in awareness-raising talks.
- **Increased social aspect:** A mentor suggested the need to maintain a social and fun aspect to mentoring. This worked brilliantly when all mentees and mentors went tenpin bowling together. Such activities maintain the energy of the first meeting and when planned through the mentoring year will improve the staying-on rate.
- **Once-a-month mentoring at the university rather than the school:** This is a response to the transport problems and a way of raising the profile of the scheme and giving mentees new experiences. It will also provide possible activities during the Christmas-time hiatus.
- **Development of email links for mentoring:** This is another response to the problem of times when physical mentoring cannot take place.
- **Earlier start to mentoring:** Training mentors in May will enable them to start mentoring earlier than the previous best start time of early November.
- **In-depth interviews with mentees:** Introduced this (summer) term, this will be the first proper attempt at an evaluation of the scheme.
- **Appointment of administrative support staff:** This was a masterstroke which has done more to facilitate mentoring than any other single change. For a mere £600 per year one of the office staff is always available on the front desk to take phone calls about mentoring, greet mentors on arrival, send reminders to mentees and maintain the meeting diary. Previously, everyone left messages for other people who were unavailable at the time, with the result that messages were received too late in most cases. This member of staff also attends mentor training and some meetings with the university and EAZ.
- **Development of email links with mentors and university:** Another big communication improvement. Emails can be sent and answered at a convenient time.
- **Regular meetings with the university:** We meet termly in connection with mentoring and also termly through the Excellence Challenge.
- **Use of different year groups:** Using groups other than Year 10 is part of a more sophisticated approach to the selection of mentees. We will move some of the mentoring to Year 11 and some to Year 9.

LEARNING MENTORS: A PERSPECTIVE

Anne Hayward

Education consultant and former Deputy Director, North East Lincolnshire LEA

Anne Hayward is Lead Consultant to the DfES on learning mentors and learning support units, and the author of the Department's *Good Practice Guidelines* on learning mentors and learning support units, published in December 2001 and April 2002 respectively. In her address she gave an overview of the learning mentors programme and considered

- the implications of the programme for school management systems
- monitoring and evaluation – how to measure the impact of learning mentors
- the perspectives of Ofsted, HMI, the DfES and NFER in relation to the programme.

What is a learning mentor?

Learning mentors, who are paid, full-time professionals, came into being some three years ago through the Excellence in Cities programme, which now covers about a hundred partnerships or clusters throughout the UK. It is important for pupils, teachers and other professionals who come into contact with learning mentors to be clear about what their role involves. A learning mentor is

- a role model and a guide
- an active listener and an observer
- a supporter and an encourager
- a professional friend
- a challenger of assumptions
- a negotiator of targets.

It is perhaps even more important to be clear about what a learning mentor is **not**, namely:

- a counsellor
- a classroom assistant
- a babysitter
- a corridor monitor
- a disciplinarian
- someone to whom a pupil is sent when naughty.

It is a real challenge for schools and managers to monitor and evaluate how learning mentors are deployed, and to ensure that they do not become involved in areas (such as counselling and discipline) in which they are not qualified and in which they could do damage.

Who should have a learning mentor?

The purpose of learning mentors is to improve attainment, to improve attendance and behaviour and reduce the numbers of pupil exclusions. There are not enough learning mentors to enable them to be allocated to every pupil who might benefit from mentoring, and so those pupils who would benefit most have to be carefully targeted. This requires an analysis of data to determine which cohorts of pupils, or individuals, are underachieving and why. Pupils who could benefit from learning mentors cover a wide range; causes of underachievement include

- poor attendance
- demotivation
- falling behind with work
- language difficulties (e.g. for asylum seekers)
- behaviour problems
- responsibility for looking after a younger sibling or caring for a parent
- bereavement
- lack of self-esteem (very difficult to identify)
- truancy
- mobility (i.e. frequent change of school)
- clash between home and peer culture
- communication problems (at home or school).

What difference can learning mentors make?

When asked about their experience of having a learning mentor pupils in both primary and secondary schools have made some interesting comments, attributing the success of their mentor to the fact that they were not a teacher, they were not judgemental, and they listened. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that learning mentors make an impact both on individual pupils and on school standards.

On individual pupils

Learning mentors

- provide a support network
- raise attainment and attendance, and prevent exclusion
- improve social skills, self-esteem, confidence and motivation
- improve relationships with peers, families and staff
- provide structure and enable pupils to organise themselves better
- increase pupils' respect for others
- make pupils more aware of their true potential
- enable pupils to 'own' their problems
- promote a greater awareness of career opportunities
- support parents/carers and pupils in handling and resolving conflicts in a positive way.

On school standards

Learning mentors make an impact on many fronts:

- improved attainment, attendance and punctuality, and fewer exclusions
- improved communication with parents/carers, teachers, managers, governors and other agencies, enabling them to be much better informed about the progress of individual pupils
- increase in extra-curricular activities and additional qualifications gained by pupils: learning mentors have been very successful in encouraging pupils to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities
- additional support and expertise for alternative curriculum developments
- additional support for teachers and increased awareness of individual pupils' needs
- greater support and accessibility for parents/carers
- reduction in anti-social behaviour
- improved image of pupil support across the school: previously pupils had a very negative

view of extra support, but they regard having a learning mentor as ‘cool’.

In primary schools

Here learning mentors have had an impact in additional areas. In particular they enable staff to dedicate more time to pupils and provide intervention more regularly, and by being around in the playground and providing a safe haven at lunchtimes they help to stop behaviour problems.

The role of learning mentors

Principles

It is important for those managing learning mentors to deploy them across the school and to get information from them about a whole range of school activity which teachers are not always able to observe for themselves – in the playground, in the corridors, before and after school, etc. Teachers are faced with large amounts of data but do not have the time to analyse it all, and a key role of learning mentors is to **identify and remove barriers to learning**. Their role is also to **set targets**, monitoring pupils’ progress towards them and providing guidance; it is important for all staff to have a common understanding of the target-setting process, but this is not always well defined for learning mentors and there is still some scope for improvement in training and support in the art of target setting, action planning, review, etc. If the targets set are not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited), it will not be possible to measure progress.

Other key aspects of the role of learning mentors are

- building pupils’ confidence and self-esteem
- liaising with families and staff
- developing a whole-school culture.

Practice

Timetable

Learning mentors will do a variety of work, including both one-to-one mentoring and group work (which can involve anger management, confrontational skills, building self-esteem, ‘buddying’); they may be involved in organising peer mentoring, in self-referrals (serving as a sympathetic and understanding listener), and in before/after-school and lunchtime activities and residential visits. Their timetable should also allow time for

- administration (action planning, recording, etc.)
- home visits
- links with other agencies
- meetings with staff and those involved with other mentoring schemes
- training and networking
- in-class support/observations
- line management/supervision
- collecting information on new pupils
- planning.

Confidentiality

Learning mentors will be privy to confidential information from the school, the pupil, the home and other agencies, and schools need to have a clear policy on confidentiality both within the

school and in relation to outside agencies.

Case loads

A learning mentor's case load should be 'reasonable', and allow time for networking, home visits, administration and training. Case loads will consist of pupils who need different levels of intervention: significant, medium or infrequent. Case loads vary but in practice 10-15 cases requiring significant intervention appears to be manageable.

School management

The key issue for school management in preparing for learning mentors is to allow sufficient time for planning. Introducing extra staff into the school does not in itself raise attainment; managers have to make proper preparation for the initiative, and this involves

- reviewing/auditing existing school structures, staff roles and responsibilities, referral systems and communication networks
- analysing and using a range of data, including SATs and CATs, the SEN register, GCSE results and post-16 retention rates
- combining EiC and school development plan targets
- reviewing key policy documents to incorporate new initiatives.

In many schools this review process has led to a change in the management structure; a new post of social inclusion manager has developed and is currently the fastest-growing post advertised in the *TES*. The social inclusion manager should be part of the leadership team, with responsibility for coordinating not only learning mentors but also SENCO, the learning support unit, contact with the education welfare service, and other initiatives. This role is too large to be simply added to the responsibilities of a head of year or deputy head. The social inclusion manager needs to have access to the school budget, to be able to deploy staff and to devise a package for pupils that might include support from several different initiatives. Schools need to move away from registers – of attendance, behaviour, SEN – and towards a whole-school database.

Managing the initiative effectively

In addition to planning time for senior management, schools need

- policies for mentoring, behaviour, social inclusion, transition, individual support
- referral forums or systems for allocating cases and determining levels of support required
- common action plans
- whole-school assessment and curriculum developments.

A typical policy for the learning mentor initiative incorporates information/guidelines on

- the objectives of the initiative
- the staffing structure, roles and responsibilities of key members of staff
- operational procedures: communication, line-management systems
- the mentoring process
- identification strategies and indicators of need
- referral form systems, action plans and target setting
- key documents (e.g. model letters)
- exit criteria
- the range of one-to-one and group work activities

- links with other mentoring systems in the school
- monitoring and evaluation strategies
- links with other plans in the school.

It is important that any separate mentoring initiatives within the school are coordinated so that pupils do not receive mentoring from several different people under different initiatives, which can be very disruptive and confusing.

All learning mentors, who will come from a range of different professional backgrounds, need proper induction into the school and the initiative, and time to 'find their feet'. Whole-staff training is essential when outside professionals are brought into the school. Learning mentors also need resources, and a suitable location for mentoring and administration.

Monitoring and evaluation

At national level

Four bodies are involved in monitoring and evaluating the learning mentors initiative:

1. The **DfES** is looking closely at quantitative data – how many mentors there are in a school, how many have been trained, how they are deployed, how many pupils they are allocated, and what impact they have had on attainment and attendance.
2. **HMI** is monitoring the learning mentor initiative across the country and will be producing a report shortly.
3. The **NFER** is evaluating the programme as part of its evaluation of Excellence in Cities.
4. **Ofsted** inspection teams are monitoring and evaluating the use of learning mentors against the following criteria:

   - Clear referral arrangements are in place and mentoring complements the provision.
   - Learning mentors are adequately trained and there is a whole-school approach.
   - Effective information is provided for learning mentors.
   - Pupils understand the process.
   - Senior managers understand and support learning mentors in their role.
   - Provision is monitored and evaluated.

   Schools should ensure that they build these criteria into the scheme at the planning stage, and are able to demonstrate that the criteria are being met. They might find it useful to provide the inspection team with brief documentation giving an overview of their social inclusion programmes, and a small number of case studies of specific pupils in different year groups who have been involved in the learning mentors programme. They should also give the team the names of the learning mentors and their timetables, and should arrange for the learning mentors to meet the team and for the team to talk to groups of pupils who have had support from learning mentors.

At local level

Various different mechanisms exist for the monitoring and evaluation of learning mentors at local level. These include monitoring by the LEA or a locally established partnership, termly reports by link learning mentors, visits to schools by link inspectors, and the establishment of an electronic database for the collection of evidence.

At school level

The headteacher will often be responsible for monitoring and evaluation at school level. It is important to consider both quantitative and qualitative evidence; this includes

- attendance rates (of individuals or groups) and punctuality
- attainment
- exclusions
- behaviour in class (e.g. using staff perception questionnaires)
- motivation and self-esteem
- progress against individual targets set
- pupils' opinion of mentoring
- parents' perceptions
- case studies (briefly outlining the issues, the strategies used, and their impact)
- governing body reports
- learning mentors' self-assessments
- mentoring registers.

As discussed above, there is a lot of evidence that learning mentors have an impact, not only on pupils but also on teachers and other professionals, but one of the challenges for schools is how to show this. Some schools have used statistical analysis to show very clearly, for specific cohorts of pupils, improvements in attendance, SATs results or GCSE grades (where the grades achieved are higher than those predicted). Others have obtained very positive results from questionnaires for pupils, asking questions such as 'Would you advise your friends to work with a mentor?', 'What were your hopes for mentoring?', 'How has mentoring affected you as a person?' Responses to the last in one school include 'attend school more often', 'find it easier to talk to adults', 'less disruptive in class', 'more interested', 'more positive about myself', 'more confident', 'more punctual', 'attend more lessons', and, in first place, 'more organised'.

There are many different ways of collecting data, and they need to be used with care to ensure that the information and analysis is relevant and does not present a distorted picture. Often the data collected initially will not be conclusive but will simply reveal that there is an issue that needs to be explored further. There is a particular need for secondary schools to work with primary schools in planning for the primary/secondary transition, which can have a crucial impact on pupil attendance, attainment and behaviour – the key aspects on which the success of the learning mentors programme will be judged.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PILOT STUDY

Alan Evans

National Coordinator, NMPP

Next annual conference

It had been suggested at the conference of EAZ and university directors that there should be a single joint conference next year, and this was supported by the school coordinators present. The joint conference would however incorporate separate workshops of interest to the different groups. It was likely to be held in the Midlands (possibly Aston), and the date would be publicised as far as possible in advance.

Modification of training

In April 2002 responsibility for the awareness-raising sessions was devolved to the universities, who were now experienced enough to undertake this aspect of the training. The university project director, the university project administrator and two experienced mentors would run the session, giving the potential mentors information about what was expected of them, what challenges and opportunities were offered by the scheme, and why it might not be appropriate for them to become a mentor this year. A number of sessions had been run so far and they had all been very successful. The new arrangement would enable the money saved on trainer fees, accommodation and travel to be put into further training, better documentation and more individual attention to problems in specific areas.

A further modification is that the initial training session will include a greater input on homework, coursework, revision and exam technique, drawing on the best practice of mentees who have taken GCSEs, as incorporated in a new appendix to the Mentor's Handbook. This will enable mentors to be much better equipped and more focused on these areas. The material will also be incorporated in the top-up training for those mentors who have already undergone the initial training.

Improved documentation

- The new edition of the Mentor's Handbook will include two new appendices, one as described above and one on different learning styles. The section on questioning techniques has also been augmented.
- The new Administrative Handbook incorporates all the separate pieces of documentation that have been sent to universities and schools over the past two years, as well as additional material, all in an easily accessible and coherent form. A new edition will be available in the autumn, incorporating changes such as the new system for police checks.
- The third issue of *The Mentor* newsletter had been published at the end of May. In Alan Evans's opinion each issue so far had been better than the last, but he was keen that school coordinators should have a bigger input and would welcome contributions from them.
- Case studies: So far eight case studies had been submitted, describing the growth and development of the project in individual areas. All EAZs and universities who had not yet done so would be asked to submit a case study (of about 2000 words) this year. The studies would be passed to the DfES as part of the project evaluation.

Mentor of the Year Award

The judging and award ceremony for the 2002 Award had taken place on 14 June in the Guildhall, London. The standard had been even higher than in 2001, with six or seven mentors of truly exceptional quality. A report would be included in the autumn issue of *The Mentor*. Alan Evans was keen to recognise the input from school coordinators in nominating mentors, and undertook to invite any who nominated the winning mentors next year to attend the award ceremony.

The next two years

The coming year would be crucial to the future of the project. Evaluation was the key issue, and it was essential for schools to improve their data collection so that a substantial body of quantitative data could be presented to the DfES. There was a need for evidence from about 30–40 project schools, in the form of baseline data collected either at Key Stage 3 (in the September or October before pupils took their Key Stage 3 tests), or at GCSE level, using the YELLIS (or equivalent) test in October to provide a benchmark before the GCSE examinations the following May.

Two workshops would be run by the Independent Evaluator, Prue Huddleston, in July, one in Manchester and one in London, to brief school coordinators on how to collect data in an economical way, and to provide proformas and other documentation to help them in this task. There would be an input from a deputy headteacher working with YELLIS, who would explain how his school collects and analyses data with little additional burden to staff. A key issue to be debated was whether schools would be willing to use a random sample of pupils to act as a control group in measuring the impact of the project on the mentored pupils. What was needed was evidence that mentoring had led to an *improvement* in pupils' GCSE grades across a range of schools in different parts of the country.

In conclusion

The project had become tighter and more coherent in the 15 months that had elapsed since the last conference. It is now a more focused and coherent partnership; the mentors are better supported and better targeted; and much of this improvement is attributable to the efforts of school coordinators over this period. Evaluation might be the key issue but it is not the only one, and the prospects for the project over the coming year are very encouraging.

National Mentoring Pilot Project
Cardiff University
July 2002

APPENDIX 1: CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THE CONTRIBUTION OF MENTORING TO RAISING ASPIRATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Third National Conference of School Coordinators

Management Centre, Bradford University
18–19 June 2002

Tuesday 18 June 2002

14.00	Optional visit to the National Museum of Film, TV and Photography, Bradford
17.00	**Welcome to Bradford** Caroline Chambers, Project Director, Bradford University Bernard Dady, Achievement Support Manager, Innovation and Development (National Strategies), Education Bradford, and former Director, South Bradford EAZ
17.30	**Effective innovation strategies: the contribution to school improvement** Sid Slater, Senior Adviser, Standards and Effectiveness Unit, DfES Chair: Phil Green, Director of Education, Bradford
19.30	**Reception**
20.00	**Formal dinner** Guest speaker: Dr Gervase Phinn, Former Inspector, North Yorkshire LEA, and author of *The Other Side of the Dale*

Wednesday 19 June 2002

08.45	**Mentoring and evaluation: messages from the NMPP Interim Evaluation Study** Dr Prue Huddleston, Independent Evaluator, Warwick University
09.45	**Case studies from project schools** David Glenn, Hedworthfield Comprehensive School, South Tyneside EAZ Ian Wright, Staunton Park Community School, Leigh Park EAZ
11.30	**Learning mentors: a perspective** Anne Hayward, Education consultant and former Deputy Director, North East Lincolnshire LEA
14.00	**Key developments in the pilot project** Alan Evans, National Coordinator, NMPP
15.00	**Close**

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

J R Bennett, King George V School, South Shields, Tyne & Wear

Malcolm Boulter, Telford and Wreakin EAZ

David Button, The Lord Silkin School, Telford

John Calvert, Our Lady and St Chad RC Comprehensive School, Wolverhampton

Caroline Chambers, Bradford University

Anne Colley, Institute of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University

Anita Counter, Cedar Mount High School, Manchester

David Glenn, Hedworthfield Comprehensive School, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear

Brian Hannaford, Hirst High School, Ashington, Northumberland

Roger Hiskey, Aylwin Girls School, London

Prue Huddleston, Centre for Education and Industry, Warwick University

Hannah Hyam, Conference reporter

Martin Plant, Alfred Barrow School, Barrow-in-Furness

Val Powell, Central Technology College, Gloucester

Sue Robinson, Salt Grammar School, Bradford

Orita Smith, Geoffrey Chaucer Technology College, London

Sandra Stansfield, Bradford Cathedral Community College

Maralyn Stoddart, The College High School, Birmingham

Diana Taylor, NMPP, Cardiff University

Julia Tortise, The Heartlands High School, Birmingham

Carla Weatherill, Bradford University

Bob Wennington, Phoenix School, Telford

Gary Wheeler, Beaufort Community School, Gloucester

Ian Wright, Staunton Park Community School, Havant, Hampshire