# Children's COMMISSIONER

# Forging futures through mentoring

A risk worth pursuing?

APRIL 2018

## LKMco

LKMco works across the education, youth and policy sectors. We help organisations develop and evaluate projects for young people and carry out academic and policy research and campaigning about the issues that experience tells us matter. Find out more at www.lkmco.org, or get in touch at info@lkmco.org.

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## Acknowledgements

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# 1. Executive Summary

Approaches involving mentoring are increasingly popular in England as initiatives to support young people (Hooley 2016). However, to date there has been limited evidence available as to mentoring's effectiveness and the characteristics of good practice. This is particularly the case in relation to vulnerable young people, such as those in care. In 2005 the Social Exclusion Unit argued that the evidence base demonstrating that mentoring benefits vulnerable young people 'is patchy and inconclusive', while in 2007 a review of the evidence on mentoring conducted by the UK's Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) (Philip & Spratt 2007) found the evidence base on the value of mentoring to be, at best, mixed.

In the intervening decade, mentoring has remained popular as an intervention for young people in the UK. At the same time, empirical studies of the impact of mentoring have also become more widespread and better-developed, although the evidence of its impact on vulnerable young people is still mixed. This report shines a light on the current state of mentoring provision in England and asks the following questions:

> How widespread is mentoring as an intervention for young people in England?
> How widespread is mentoring for vulnerable young people in England?
> What outcomes are mentoring programmes attempting to achieve for young people?
> What does the evidence suggest about the impact of these mentoring programmes?
> How can the Office for the Children's Commissioner best support the sector to maximise the impact that mentoring has on vulnerable young people in particular?

The report is not a formal systematic review along the lines of a Cochrane review that collects all published evidence and limits scope to evidence that is very rigorous about establishing clear causal pathways, through randomised control trials and similar methods. We see value in such an approach but the aim here has been to summarise a broad range of evidence to clarify general issues and findings. The report is based on:

> Analysis of a sample of over 350 mentoring programmes across England, identified from an online search of mentoring programmes and a national survey of local authorities.
> A review of the literature relating to the impact of mentoring-based programmes.
> Interviews with sector experts.

Our analysis of mentoring programmes offers an overview of mentoring provision in England in 2018, including the extent to which programmes vary by location, type, and groups of young people targeted. Meanwhile, our literature review and expert interviews examine what is known about the potential impact and effectiveness of mentoring, and how this relates to current provision of mentoring programmes in England.

This report finds that mentoring is a widely used intervention, used primarily with teenagers in England. Our sample contained a higher proportion of mentoring programmes in London than in the rest of the country, relative to population. There were some regions where we found relatively few mentoring programmes, most notably in the East Midlands and North East of England, though this may be due to survey non-response rather than a genuine absence of mentoring activity. Over half of the programmes in our sample explicitly targeted vulnerable young people. Programmes used a mix of volunteer and paid mentors, and most were community-based rather than school-based. The programmes in our sample held a range of aims. Most often, programmes aimed to support mentees' social and emotional

development, although a notable proportion targeted more tangible outcomes such as academic attainment. Many programmes aimed to improve outcomes for mentees across a number of domains.

This report also examines the evidence on the effectiveness of mentoring, including for vulnerable young people. It also considers the implications of that evidence for programmes already operating in the England. We find that the evidence supporting positive impact for mentoring is developing, and suggests that overall, there are modest positive effects, albeit with considerable variation both within and between programmes. Vulnerable young people may be particularly well served by mentoring relationships, but at the same time mentoring relationships that end early can have harmful effects for these young people. We identify several features of effective mentoring programmes and relationships, including the duration of relationships, the quality of monitoring and support for mentors and allowing young people themselves to set the agenda. Some features of quality in mentoring relationships also may impact on outcomes, such as closeness, shared interests and role-modelling.

While the evidence on effectiveness of mentoring internationally is growing, more work is needed to develop the evidence base for mentoring in England, and to support the plethora of mentoring programmes already running in this country. Resources that summarise the evidence on "what works" should be gathered in one place and made easily available to programmes.

We think it is important that mentors and providers of mentoring are aware of the strengths, weaknesses and risks of mentoring. Where possible, programmes should adhere to the central concepts of relationship duration and support for mentors. We see value in a central repository or data base of evidence on what works in mentoring.

Further research is required to add to the experimental evidence base on the impact of mentoring programmes in England, while at the same time, more exploratory research will help to fill gaps in the evidence, for example around the quality of mentoring relationships.
Programmes should be evaluated as rigorously as possible. Depending on size and budget, programmes should consider being part of RCTs for larger, national-scale projects. Smaller programmes might also seek to partner with research organisations to understand their impact better; and add to the research base for mentoring.

# 2. Methodology

This report is based on three elements of data collection:

> A mapping exercise to build a sample of mentoring provision in England, based on an online search of mentoring programmes, and responses to a request for information about mentoring programmes issued to Directors of Childrens' Services.

> A rapid review of the UK and international literature on the impact and effectiveness of mentoring.

> Interviews with a series of academics and experts on mentoring.

The approach allowed for an initial trawl of the literature and early expert interviews to provide a framework for discussing what effective mentoring looks like; before the mapping exercise gave an impression of current provision in terms of mentoring programmes in England. Finally, a more detailed reading of the literature, with reference back to the expert opinions allowed a more evaluative analysis of the impact of mentoring, showing how the characteristics of programmes in our sample appeared to align with findings in the literature.

## Mapping mentoring programmes

Two elements contributed to a sample of 366 mentoring providers in England.

1. An online keyword search of mentoring programmes in the UK. The keywords covered a range of potential mentoring programmes, including those aimed at vulnerable young people. A list of keywords can be found in Appendix 1. The sample was populated from each key word. The sample included a description of each programme, target group, type of mentoring, location and geographical coverage where possible. Where a provider appeared in more than one keyword search, duplicates were removed so that the database included unique providers. 148 providers of mentoring programmes were identified in this way.

2. A request was sent to Directors of Childrens' Services in every local authority in England asking for details of mentoring programmes that local authorities ran, funded or oversaw. Mentoring programmes run by schools in the local authority were not included in the request. The text of the request can be found in Appendix 2. We received 56 responses. 212 programmes were identified in this way. Where a programme had also been identified in our online search, duplicates were removed.

Using this data, we compiled a sample populated with 366 mentoring programmes. As such, the sample was not random, and was likely to have been influenced by response bias which could potentially skew the picture of provision of mentoring programmes at a national level, as well as the comparative regional picture. For instance, local authorities that didn't respond within the time may have faced budgetary or staffing constraints, or managed a particularly developed or complex system of mentoring provision that would require extended work to report on. As a result, the mapping exercise may have systematically overlooked particular forms of provision, although we are not able to quantify this effect. Likewise, the online search may have systematically overlooked some forms of provision, for instance those delivered on a local scale on a limited budget; more ad-hoc provision; and programmes that contain elements of mentoring but were not explicitly branded as mentoring programmes. Again, this is likely to have skewed the type and characteristics of programmes in our sample in a way that this report is unable to quantify.

For each programme we were able to use information provided by local authorities, as well as the websites of programmes identified online, to categorise the programme database as following:

> The region that each programme was located in. For programmes identified in our online search, their geographical location was based on information provided on their website.

> The type of mentor used by the programme: volunteer; professional; peer. These were identified from local authority responses and information provided on websites. It was not always possible to determine the type of mentor used.

> Location of the programme: school-based or community-based. As with the types of mentor used, it was not always possible to determine where the mentoring programme took place.

> The aims of each programme. Aims were themed inductively, using the descriptions of programme aims specified by local authorities and programme websites. Programmes often specified more than one type of aim.

> The young people that each programme targeted. Groups of young people were categorised inductively based on the descriptions provided by local authorities or programme websites. The target age group of each programme was also included where this was specified.

## Literature review

The report includes findings from a rapid review of international literature on the impact and effectiveness of mentoring, with particular emphasis on mentoring vulnerable young people.

We undertook a keyword search (appendix 1) of peer-reviewed literature databases using Web of Science. The published time range was 2007-2017, and the publication language was English. This initial keyword search yielded 2,546 results. These were further screened by title and abstract for relevance. Particular attention was paid to systematic reviews and meta-analyses of the literature. 51 items were included in the final shortlist.

We undertook a detailed reading of the final shortlist, and extracted themes related to effect sizes, programme features and factors relating to effectiveness. Attention was paid to the type of study, their potential for bias (for example their Cochrane score relating to rigour in evaluation of causal impact) and generalisability.

## Expert interviews

In addition to the programme mapping and the literature review, we undertook 12 interviews with experts on mentoring. Experts were academics, leaders of large-scale mentoring programmes, or commissioners of mentoring programmes. Experts include those with a background in mentoring for vulnerable children. Experts were sampled opportunistically, with an initial sample identified from LKMco and the Office of the Childrens' Commissioner networks. Further interviewees were referred to us by the experts we spoke to, or were identified through the literature.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule (appendix 3). Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Transcripts were coded inductively to identify cross-cutting themes relating to effectiveness, success factors, challenges, evaluations and strength of evidence.

# 3. Mentoring programmes in the UK

Section 3 summarises the characteristics of the 366 mentoring programmes in our sample. It draws on data from an online search of mentoring programmes as well as responses from local authority Directors of Childrens' Services.

## 3.1 Regional differences

Our online searches and requests to local authorities suggest that mentoring programmes are particularly common in London compared to other regions of England. Figure 1 shows the proportion of mentoring programmes in our sample from each English region. Over a third (36%; 130) of our sample undertook their work in London. Meanwhile, only a small proportion (9%; 4) of programmes came from the North East. A similar proportion (10%; 37) undertook work in the East Midlands.
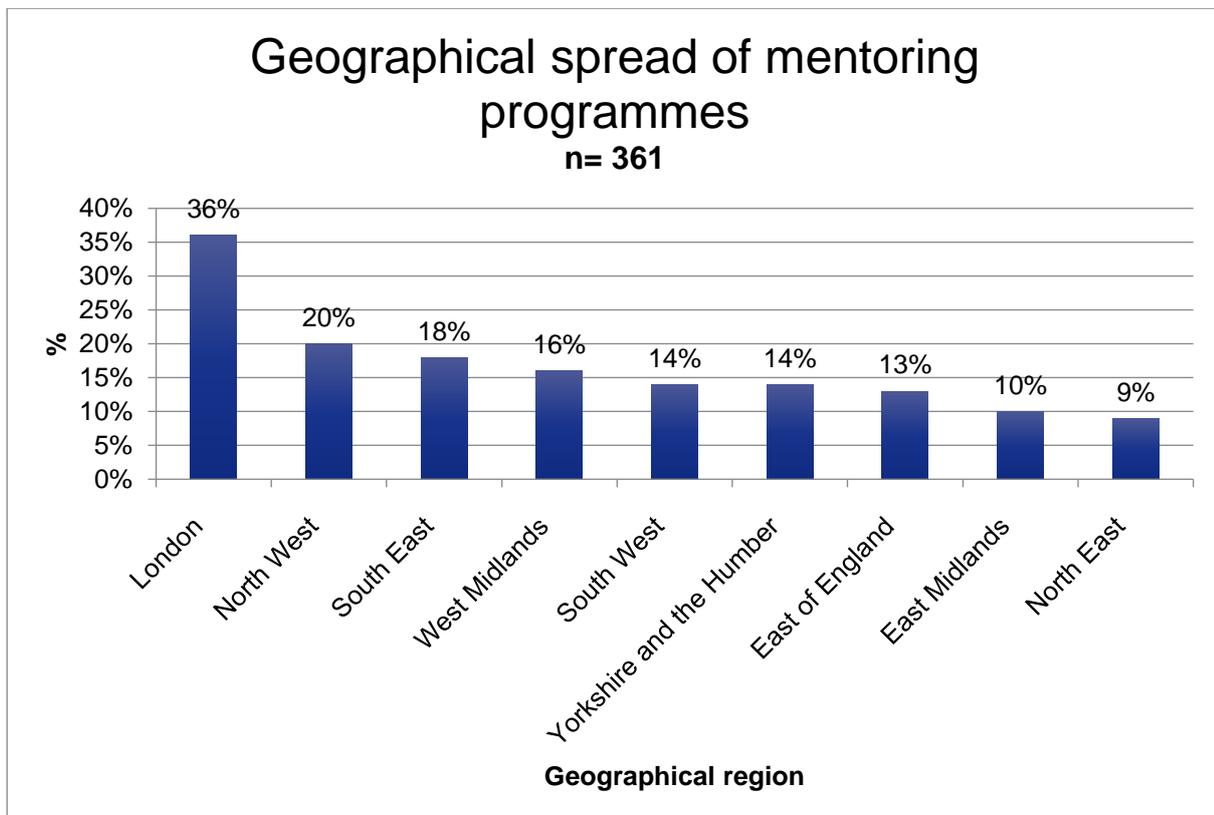


**Figure 1**

## 3.2 Target group

Most of the mentoring programmes in our sample (58%; 212) stated one or more intended target groups of young beneficiaries (figure 2). Where a target group was given, the most commonly mentioned beneficiary group was "disadvantaged" young people (23%; 83). "Disengaged/NEET" young people were also a frequent focus (given by 22% of programmes; 82).

Children in Care or Looked After Children were less commonly mentioned as were young people with SEND, Young Carers, and young people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. 12 out of 56 local authorities reported Independent Visitors programmes (IV) offering mentoring services to Looked After Children despite this being a statutory service to which all children in care are entitled.
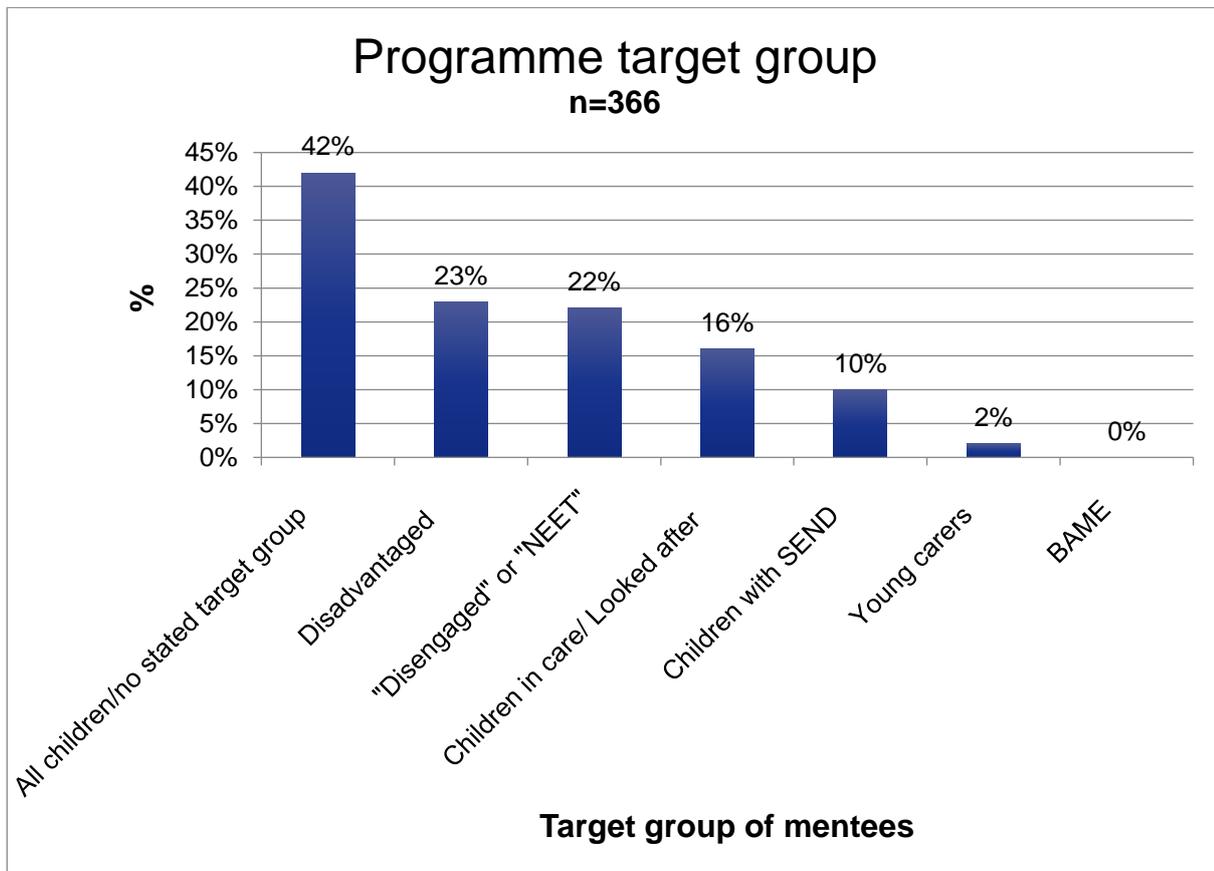


**Figure 2**

### 3.2.1 Regional variation in programme target group

The proportion of programmes that stated they targeted vulnerable young people was higher in London (n=73) than elsewhere (figure 3). Fewer programmes were reported in the North East (n=29) and the East of England (n=22).
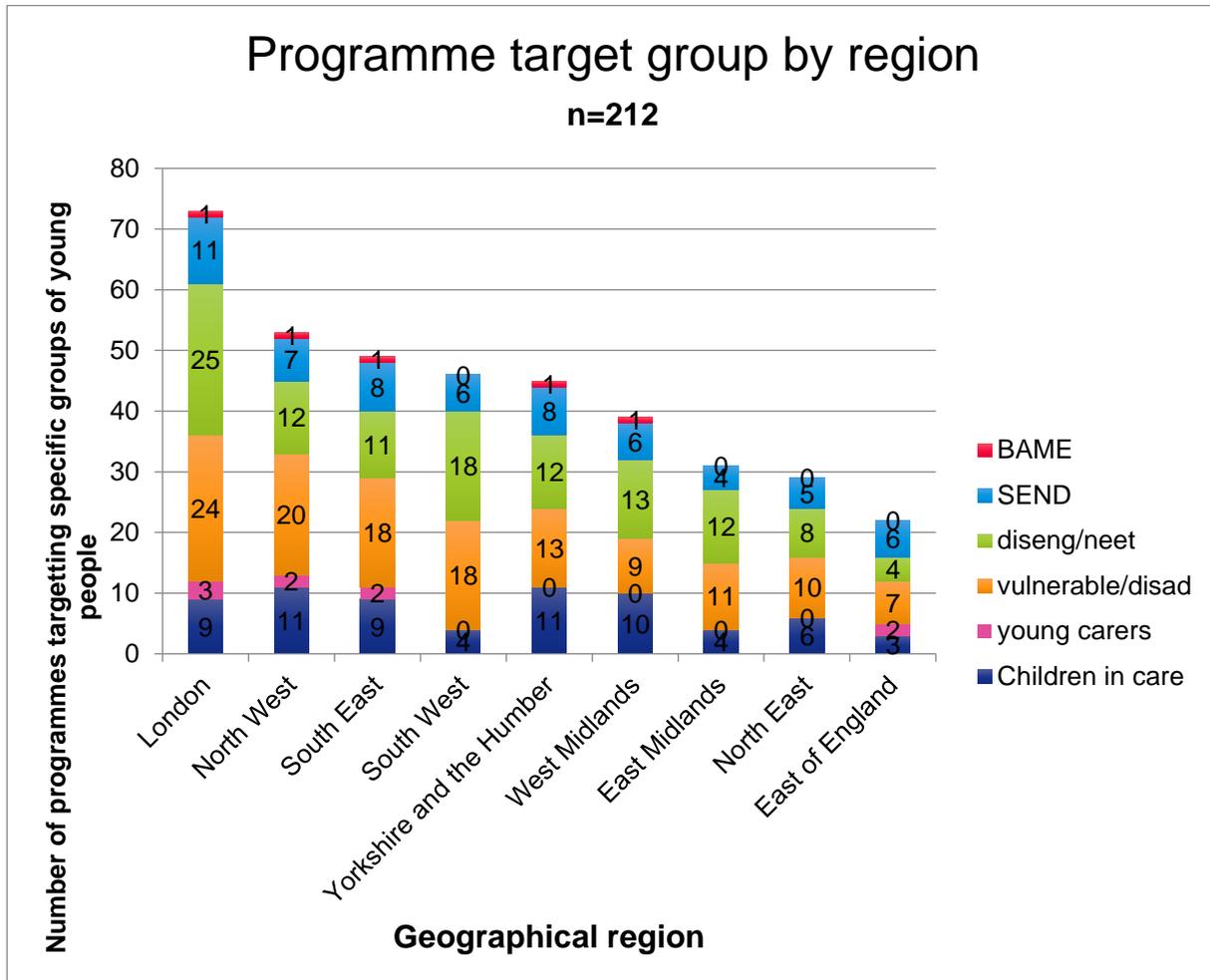


**Figure 3**

## 3.3 Age of mentees

Mentoring programmes within our sample were disproportionately focused on secondary school aged pupils. Pre-school aged children were the least commonly targeted group. Around three quarters of our sample of mentoring programmes were reported as working with secondary school aged children (figure 4). Programmes working with 12-15 year olds and 16-18 year olds were both common (73%; 149 and 71%; 145 respectively).

Around a third of programmes worked with older young people above school age (39%; n=79), and a third worked with primary school age children (33%; n=68). A small number of programmes (3%; n=7) said they work with pre-school age children.
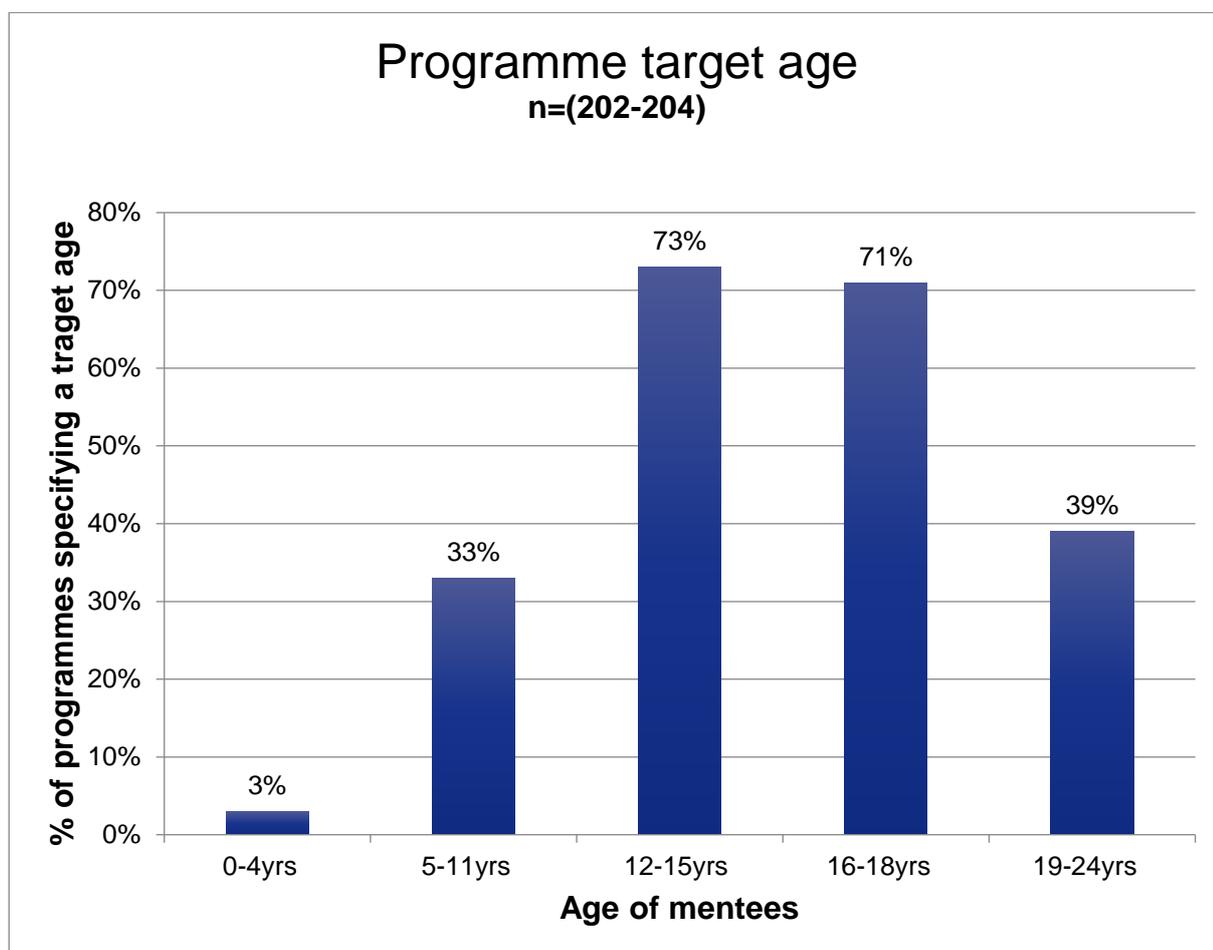


**Figure 4**

## 3.4 Aims of mentoring programmes

The mentoring programmes in our sample varied in terms of their intended outcomes (figure 5) with social and emotional development the most common focus (72%; 262 programmes). Programmes focusing on workplace outcomes such as young people gaining employment, or developing the skills needed to progress in their future careers (31%; 115 programmes) and improved academic attainment (20%; 72 programmes) were also common.

Less common intended outcomes included:
> reducing risky behaviours (such as youth offending or drug and alcohol abuse) (11%; 41);
> improving mentees' mental health (6%; 21); or
> improving mentees' physical health (2%; 6).

Many organisations reported more than one area in their intended outcomes.
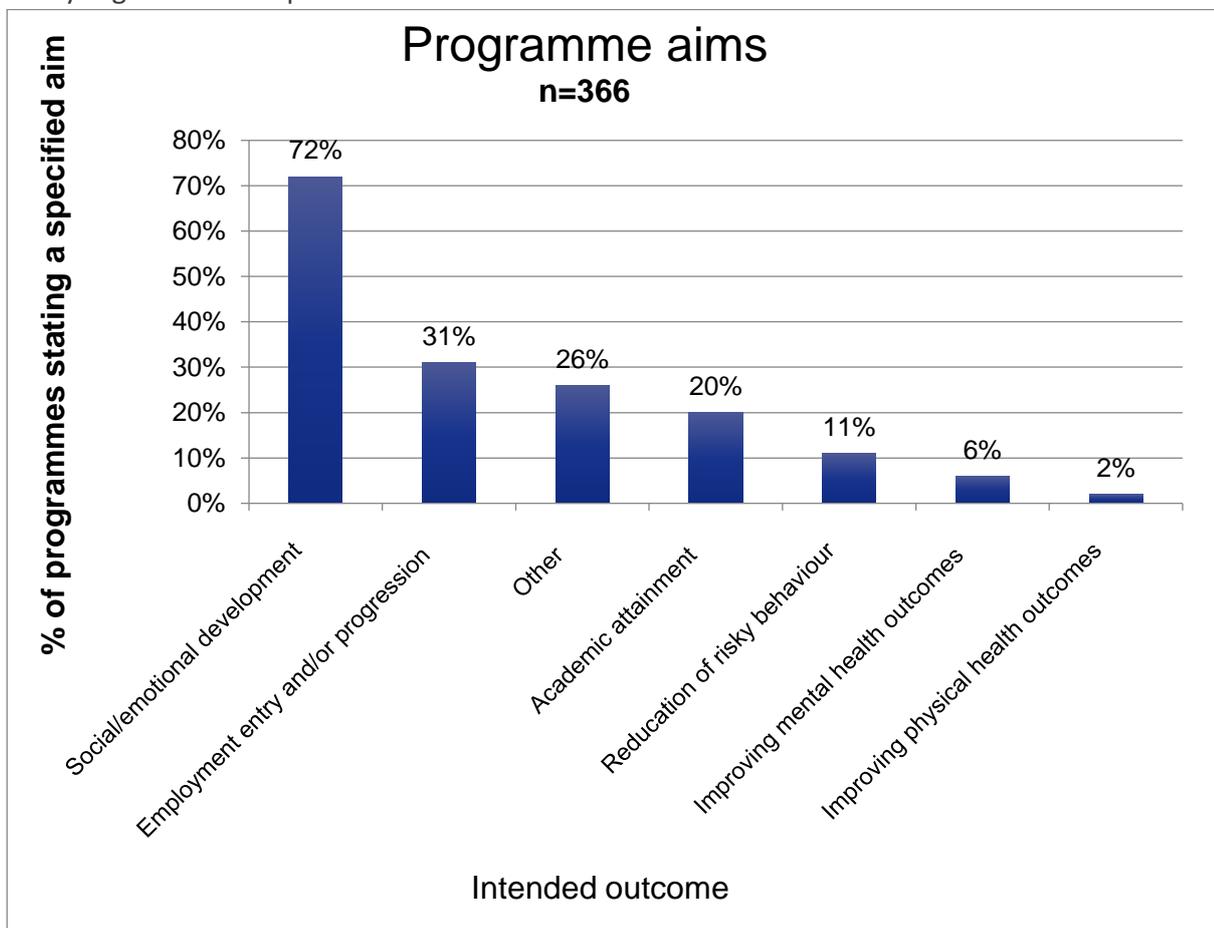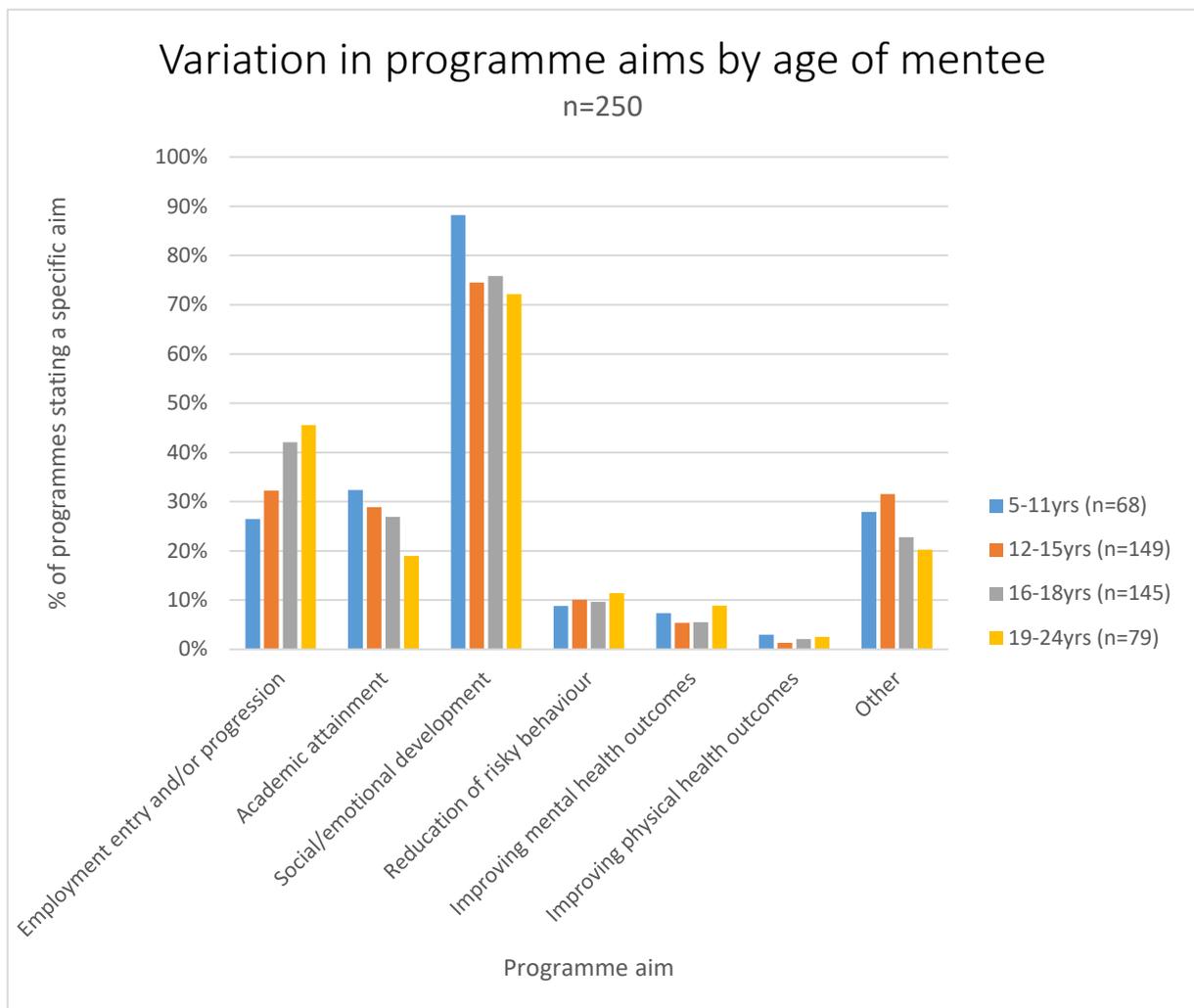


**Figure 5**

**Figure 6 (programmes with target groups aged below 5 are excluded due to small numbers)**

Programme aims also varied slightly depending on their target group's age (figure 6). Programmes with younger target groups more often aimed to improve social and emotional outcomes and academic attainment than those targeting older groups. For example, 88% (60) of programmes targeting 5-11 year olds aimed to improve social and emotional outcomes whereas 72% (57) of those targeting 19-24 year olds did so.

Conversely, programmes with older target groups more often sought to improve employment entry or progression compared to those targeting young age groups.

## 3.5 Type of mentor

Most mentoring programmes in our sample used volunteer mentors (68%; 250) (figure 7). On the other hand, more than half (57%; 209) reported using professional mentors. There was some overlap, with 17% (62) reporting using both volunteers and professionals. In contrast, a very small proportion (5%; 17) reported using peer mentors. However, we did not include mentoring programmes run by schools themselves in our search for mentoring programmes, and given that peer-mentoring is a popular intervention in schools, the analysis above is unlikely to represent the prevalence of peer-mentoring in schools.
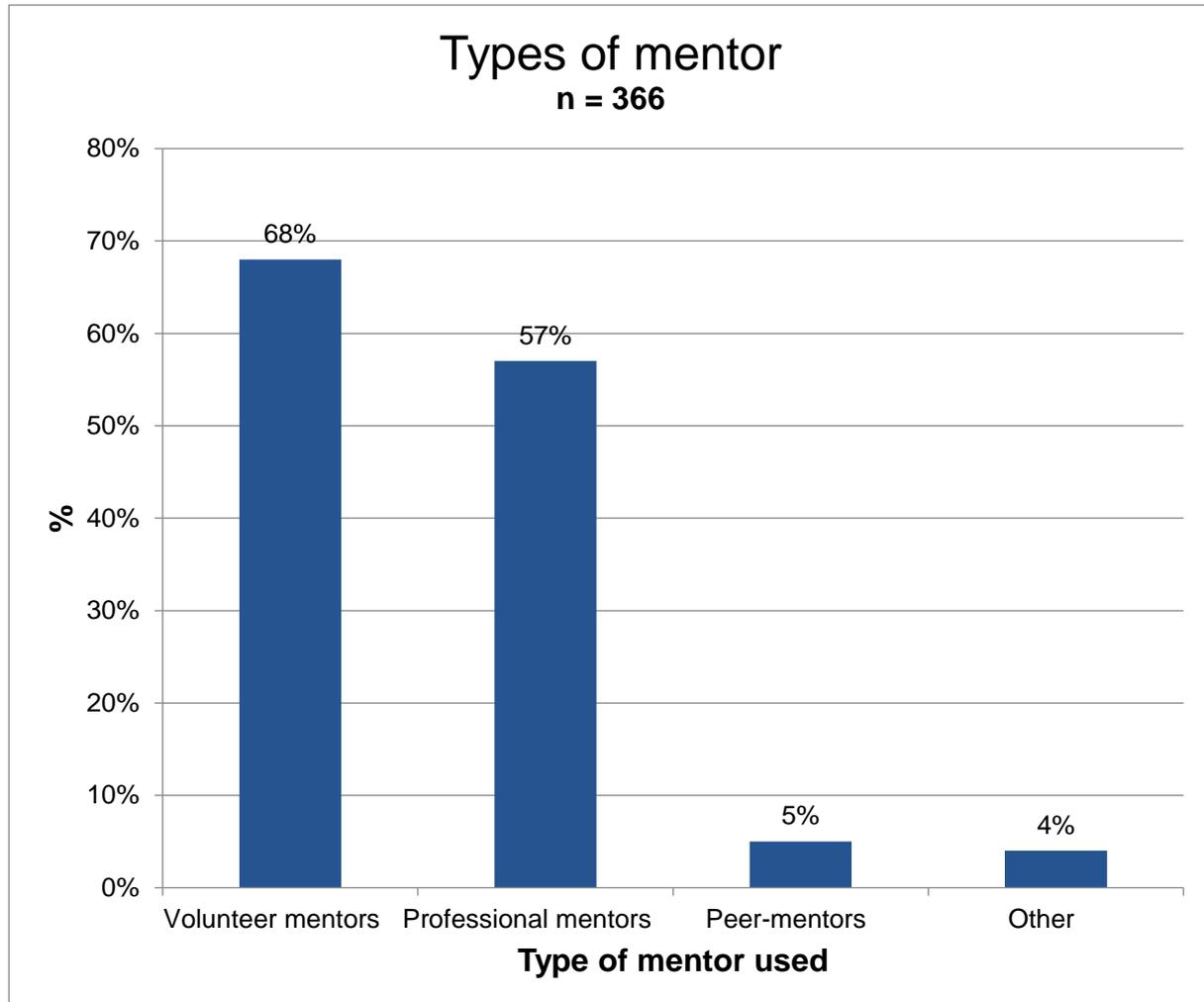


**Figure 7**

## 3.6 Where mentoring takes place

Almost all (91%; 332) the mentoring programmes in our sample were community based (figure 8) – in other words mentors tended not to be teachers, and the mentoring meetings took place outside school, in the community. However, this is not surprising given that our focus was not on mentoring programmes run by schools themselves.
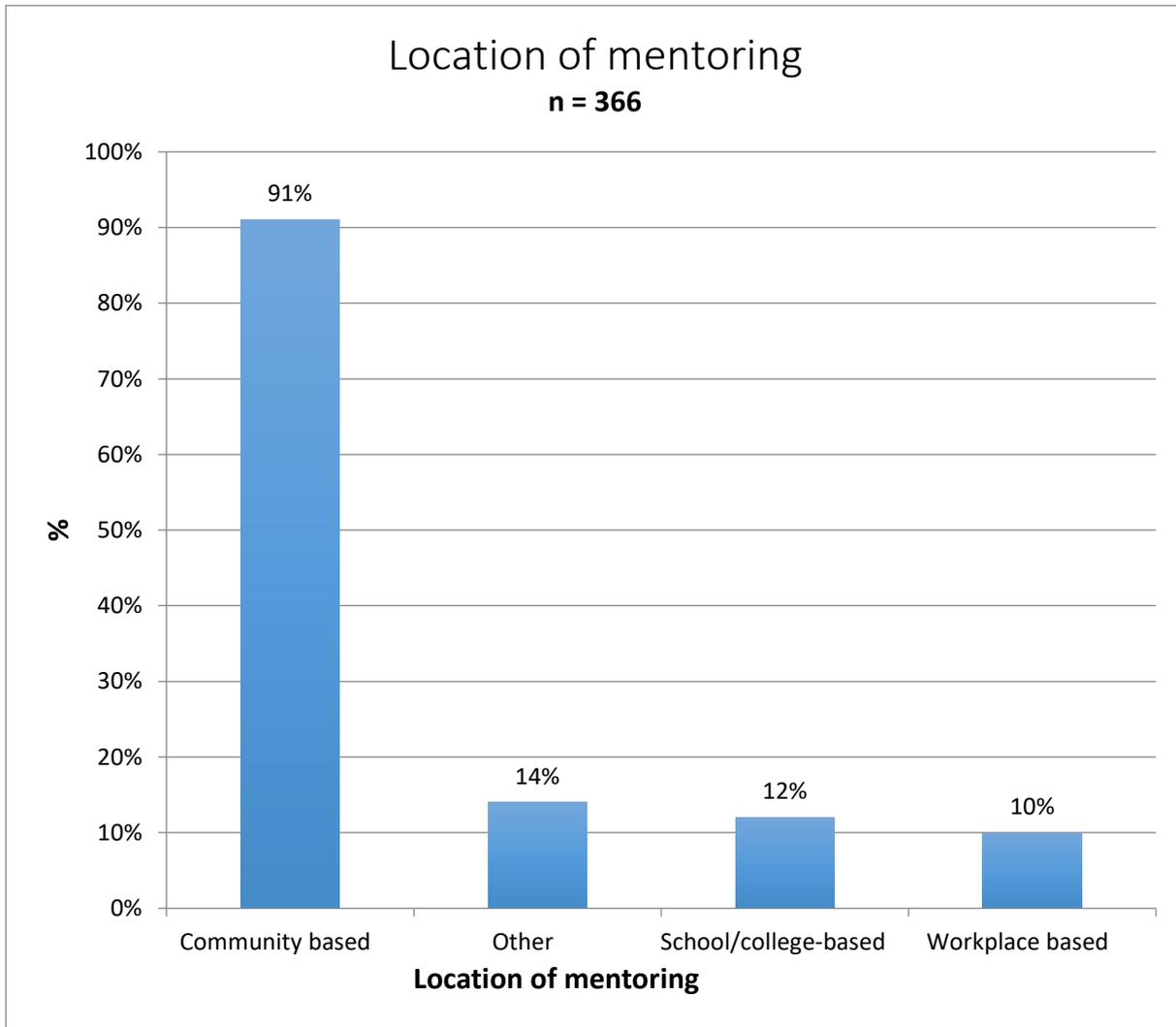


**Figure 8**

## 3.7 Summary of findings from provision mapping

> The mentoring programmes in our sample were most commonly located in London and were least frequently from the North East or the East Midlands.
> More than half of the programmes we analysed targeted vulnerable children.
> Teenagers were the most common target group and most of the programmes we identified were community-based.
> Programmes use a mixture of volunteer and professional mentors, but more than half include at least some professional mentors.
> The most commonly stated type of intended outcome was improved social and emotional development.
> Programmes targeting young people aged 16+ were slightly more likely than others to aim to improve workplace or career outcomes.

# 4. The evidence base

Section 4 sets out the factors that influence mentoring's effectiveness, especially for vulnerable young people. We draw on existing literature that encompasses a range of methodologies including systematic reviews and meta-analyses, RCTs and quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal analyses and qualitative work - including comparative case studies and thematic analysis with children and their mentors and parents.

We bring together findings from the international literature and themes identified by our experts to discuss:

> The evidence regarding mentoring's overall impact;
> The different models of mentoring deployed by different programmes, and how these link to their effectiveness;
> Mentoring programmes' intended outcomes, and which of these, if any, it appears to have most impact on;
> The impact of mentoring on vulnerable young people;
> Success factors, particularly the role of mentoring relationships and programme structure; and
> Challenges for mentoring providers.

## 4.1 Evidence of overall impact

Many of the experts we spoke to highlighted a perceived lack of evidence, both in relation to mentoring's impact on young people, and the factors that influence this impact.

*"There's quite a lot of anecdotal evidence, but nothing specific in terms of hard facts and figures."*

- Practitioner

As another practitioner explained, there are relatively few longitudinal studies of mentoring. It is for this reason that in 2017, an All Party Parliamentary Group on mentoring was established to bring the sector together and explore what research was available.

Other practitioners argued that the empirical literature on mentoring's impact on young people is 'developing' rather than established. As one US based academic put it: "the mentoring literature is way behind the psychotherapy literature or the parenting literature".

Given experts' belief that the sector needs a better grasp of the existing evidence base we now set out to identify where the existing research base is strongest and weakest, and to highlight key gaps in our knowledge.

### 4.1.1 Meta-analyses and systematic reviews of a range of mentoring provision

Meta-analyses offer a logical starting point when reviewing the evidence base, because they offer a broad, overview of the average impact of a variety of mentoring programmes. A number of studies from the UK and USA have attempted to measure mentoring project's "average" impact on mentees. These meta-analyses draw on the findings of multiple Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) that attempt to identify the causal impact on young people that can be attributed to their participation in a given mentoring programme.

Across these studies, meta-analyses tend to find a positive but modest impact of mentoring, with only small effect sizes (DuBois et al. 2011; Wood & Mayo-Wilson 2012; Rhodes 2008).

This finding has been replicated in other non-experimental analyses of large scale mentoring programmes in the USA (DeWit et al. 2016a). Effects were strongest for pupils with pre-existing behavioural difficulties, boys (DuBois et al 2011) and younger pupils, specifically those in KS2 and 3 (Eddy et al. 2017).

*Du Bois et al (2011): How effective are mentoring programmes for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence.*

Du Bois and colleagues use meta-analysis to build on their influential 2002 meta-analysis by taking stock of evidence published between 1999 and 2010. Their focus is on the effectiveness of volunteer and "para-professional" (where the mentor may be professionally engaged with the youth, as a teacher for example, but not paid directly as a mentor), youth-development mentoring programs that target children and adolescents. Recognising the difficulty of defining "mentoring", the authors used a broad definition to identify evaluations for inclusion in their analysis:

*"A programme or intervention that is intended to promote positive youth outcomes via relationships between young persons (aged 18-years-old or younger) and specific non-parental adults (or older youth) who are acting in a non-professional helping capacity."*

- (p66)

73 studies were included in the meta-analysis, with a total of 83 separate samples. Included studies were limited to those that included a non-mentored control group, (either in a randomised experimental design, or in a quasi-experimental design). Programmes with a non-mentoring element were excluded. Studies were only included if they contained enough data to compute an effect size across a broad range of developmental and academic categories.

Overall the meta-analysis finds an average effect size on positive outcomes of .21 with a 95% confidence interval. Statistically significant positive effects were found across academic, social and emotional, behavioural and attitudinal domains.

Multiple regression analysis was used to identify moderating factors that help explain differences in effect sizes across studies. This suggested that positive effects for youth are likely to be higher for males and those who are vulnerable or high risk. Additionally, programmes that include an advocacy, teaching and information giving role for mentors, and those that match for similar interests were likely to produce greater effect sizes.

Du Bois et al (2011) find that young people who did not receive mentoring were likely to demonstrate decline compared to recipients of mentoring on most outcome measures, while young people who were mentored commonly experienced positive effects compared to non-recipients across behavioural, social, emotional and academic outcomes. They argue that their findings confirm the appeal of mentoring as a positive intervention both for increasing 'soft' outcomes, and more tangible outcomes such as academic performance.

Du Bois et al (ibid) also point out the preventative impact of mentoring shown in a range of studies which found that non-mentored young people declined on most outcome measures.
Preventative effects were also highlighted by the experts we interviewed, particularly in relation to disadvantaged young people. As one practitioner put it:

*"(Mentoring is a) preventative measure. You're preventing a series of ailments which might or might not happen to a young person which are increased depending on their circumstances and the area … or their socioeconomic circumstances that they live in or grew up in."*

- Practitioner

On the other hand, in a review of school-based mentoring, Wood and Mayo-Wilson (2012) were less positive. They argued that the short-term nature of most school-based interventions, as well as the cost of mentoring meant that, without more robust evidence confirming positive impacts, mentoring as a school-based intervention represented poor value for money. We discuss various models of mentoring programmes further in section 4.2.

### 4.1.2 The limitations of overall impact meta-analyses
It should be noted that meta-analyses of the impact of mentoring programmes have some limitations in terms of their reliability and comparability. One limitation is the quality of data in the underlying RCTs. For example, Wood and Mayo-Wilson (2012) were only able to include eight studies in their review, of which six were included in their meta-analysis. Five of those studies were RCTs.

Another limitation is the ability to draw reliable comparisons between different RCTs (even if they are of a good quality) because they relate to specific programmes which may have very different characteristics. The variation between the studies included in a meta-analysis makes it difficult to draw reliable generalisations across interventions (DuBois et al 2011, Wood and Mayo-Wilson 2012). For instance, programmes may find it difficult to ensure that their mentors adopt the same approaches or work towards similar goals. Doing so may also be problematic as one expert explained:

*"One young person might need support around school, another young person might be benefiting from how spending time with their mentor helps them regulate their emotions better."*

- US academic

It is also important to note the problem of attrition. Studies tend to only reveal outcomes for children who have completed mentoring programmes, not those who drop out early (Philip and Spratt 2007). This can skew findings and studies may therefore give an incomplete picture of impact.

There is also a dearth of longitudinal studies exploring long term impact, for example on career opportunities and earnings in later life (Pedersen 2009). This lack of evidence on long term outcomes was also highlighted in our interviews, with one expert asking:

*"Have they actually increased social mobility, have they gone on to reach their potential? We won't know for another three to five years, at least"*

- Practitioner

### 4.1.3 Impact of mentoring on vulnerable young people

58% of the mentoring programmes in our sample of provision were made available to vulnerable young people. These groups included young people living in relative poverty, those who are disengaged from education or NEET, children in care, young carers and children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). The existing evidence base suggests that mentoring can be effective at improving outcomes for these groups, but that there is greater potential for mentoring to have harmful effects for these groups of young people as we set out below.

In two meta-analyses, the authors note that effect sizes across a range of outcomes were slightly higher for disadvantaged young people than for others (DuBois et al 2011, Eddy et al 2017). The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) toolkit found extensive evidence on mentoring, and while, on average, mentoring appeared to have little impact on academic outcomes, the EEF reported an additional benefit of one month's progress on academic attainment for disadvantaged pupils relative to their more affluent peers (EEF 2017).

Some studies suggest that the apparent enhanced impact on disadvantaged young people may result from these young people being less likely to find "natural mentors" (informal mentors that either work with or related to young people, or know the young person through their community) (Erickson et al. 2016; Fruiht & Wray-Lake 2013; McDonald & Lambert 2014). This may result in them being more likely than to gain measurable benefits from teacher mentoring (Erickson et al 2009) or community-based mentoring (Fruiht and Wray-Lake 2013, McDonald and Lambert 2014) compared to their more affluent peers.

While the potential gains of mentoring might be particularly large for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, it also suggests that the negative effects of mentoring relationships ending early are particularly pronounced for these groups (Rhodes 2008; Duke et al. 2017). Furthermore, building and sustaining mentoring relationships may be more challenging for such children in the first instance (Philip and Spratt 2007).

Grossman et al (2012) and Kupersmidt et al (2017) found evidence of significantly increased risk of the early termination of a mentoring relationship for young people who have endured greater stress prior to being mentored, including experiences of emotional, sexual, or physical abuse, family or health problems, or those who were already engaged in risky behaviours such as drug or alcohol abuse.

### 4.1.4 Impact for children in care

The sample of programmes presented in Section 3 revealed that a sizeable minority of programmes in England target children in care (16%; n=60). Legally, Looked After Children or children in care in England are entitled to individual mentoring through the Independent Visitors programme. However, a recent review of the programme suggested that as few as 3.2% of the total population of children in care currently access this service (Gordon and Graham 2016).

There is some empirical evidence regarding whether (and how) mentoring programmes can enhance outcomes for young people who are transitioning from foster care's well-being (Spencer et al. 2010).

One systematic review of outcomes for children in care that included studies from the UK as well as the US, speculated that mentoring may help reduce negative outcomes (Gypen et al. 2017). Several mixed methods and qualitative studies focused on "fostered youth" or children in care suggest that mentoring has a positive impact on children's relationships with others (Rhodes et al 2009). Some qualitative studies suggest that for children in care, peer mentoring from recent care leavers with similar experiences may be useful (Mezey 2015). Buck et al (2017) suggest similar positive effects for "survivors" mentoring younger victims of abuse. Furthermore, children in care themselves appear to value mentoring programmes, with Philip and Spratt (2007) reporting that care leavers valued the "soft skills" imparted through mentoring schemes.

There is some empirical evidence that natural mentors (outlined in 4.1.3) may produce benefits for children in care. Natural mentoring was found to have a potential positive impact on a range of social, health, and academic outcomes for children in care (Ahrens et al. 2008; Munson & McMillen 2009). One systematic review of outcomes for children in care suggests that natural mentoring may serve as a protective factor and may be a better fit for young people in foster care compared to formally matched mentoring relationships with unfamiliar adults (Thompson et al. 2016).

On the other hand, the literature strikes a note of caution, stating that young people transitioning out of foster care may require greater support than others in order to benefit from mentoring relationships (Spencer et al. 2010, Greeson 2013). For example, support and guidance may be needed in order to be creative around meetings, such as being flexible when the young person has to move home unexpectedly (ibid). It can also be valuable to start mentoring earlier in childhood so that the relationship is already well established by the time the young person is leaving foster care (ibid).

This point was also raised by the experts we spoke to. One highlighted the importance of allowing children in care time to build relationships, arguing that:

*"[Mentors must] make sure they have got that young person's trust before they can start talking about some of the very difficult things… linked to…behaviour and repeating patterns of behaviour….[mentoring therefore has to be ] very bespoke"*

- Practitioner

Another academic, based in the US, who had conducted extensive qualitative research on mentoring of children in care, pressed the importance of recognising "some of the ways in which mentoring can fall short… poor endings can be particularly difficult for youth in care."

A number of experts argued that children in care needed more long-term support than others, for example through approaches akin to social pedagogical models of social work (in which holistic development across all aspects of a child life is supported by professional 'social pedagogues') because:

*"As young adults, late-teens, early-20s they are basically on their own…. [mentors] should build up into that relationship, with opportunities for more extended conversations, chatting about problems and then this sense of caring and trust can develop and through that the child can get the support to become more empowered in understanding how better to deal with the problems that they are facing in their lives."*

- UK Academic

As a result, some experts argued that mentoring should not replace government support, and should sit alongside, with the state "maintaining oversight and overall responsibility for a longer period of time… potentially up until the age of 25" (UK Academic).

### 4.1.5 Summary of findings on impact

Overall, attempts to quantify the effect of mentoring in general terms reveal modest positive impact, with clearer impact on academic attainment than on social or emotional development.

There is some evidence from meta-analyses that the likelihood of a positive effect of mentoring is higher for some disadvantaged young people, although this is balanced against a need for caution identified elsewhere in the literature, given that unsuccessful mentoring relationships may lead to harmful effects. Considerable variation between and within programmes, in terms of approach, stated outcomes and working relationships limit the extent to which existing research identifies "what works".

In order to dig deeper into the various factors that influence the effectiveness of mentoring programmes, the following sections consider the evidence in relation to:

> Different models of mentoring;
> Intended outcomes;
> The role of relationship quality and matching;
> The type and extent of support and training given to mentors; and
> Different forms of programme monitoring.

## 4.2 Models of mentoring programmes

The programmes in our sample used a mixture of volunteer and professional mentoring, with a small number using peer-mentoring. Other forms of mentoring, such as group mentoring, were not highlighted in our data collection. The programmes in our sample were predominantly community-based, rather than school based. This section examines the literature and views of experts on the relative effectiveness of different models of mentoring provision.

### 4.2.1 Volunteer or professional

Professional mentors may be teachers or social workers already working with a young person, or professionals whose primary role is as a mentor to a young person (Hooley 2016). Volunteer mentoring is the most common type of mentoring provision referred to in the literature, although professional mentoring has been the focus of some evaluations. For instance, Eddy et al (2017) conducted an RCT of a professional mentoring programme which was shown to have a similar, modest, effect size to other forms of mentoring.

The majority of the mentoring programmes in our sample used either volunteer or professional mentors, with 17% using both. The proportion of programmes using volunteer mentors was 68% while 57% used paid mentors.

A qualitative study of professional mentors (Lakind et al. 2014) working with at-risk pupils found that such mentors felt that four aspects of their professionalism contributed to programme effectiveness:
> the time spent with their mentees;
> the support they received from the programme both in terms of training but also in the respect for their roles;
> mentors' self-reported expertise with at risk pupils; and
> the heightened intensity of the relationship compared to other models.

There were conflicting views amongst the experts we interviewed as to whether mentors should be paid. Some felt that volunteer based mentoring enhanced feelings of trust. One practitioner explained that young people sometimes asked whether the organisation will be paid if the young people secure a job. The interviewee argued that when mentors respond 'no' and explains that they are there purely because they want to help, "it completely changes the conversation."

However, others felt that where young people are facing serious challenges, or are disengaged from education, professional mentoring is a better option:

*"You need to throw some money at that sort of problem…it's an intensive sort of problem, that you can't just do out of a few volunteers... that doesn't mean I don't think volunteers can be a really useful part of the solution that you build. But I think you do need to have some decent resourcing into it."*

- UK academic

### 4.2.2 Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring is a commonly used approach in UK schools (Philip & Spratt 2007). Curran and Wexler's (2017) systematic review of positive youth development in schools finds positive impacts for peer mentors, but casts doubt over the impact on mentees.

Karcher et al (2010) demonstrate the importance of peer mentors' attitudes to and engagement with younger pupils, as well as their feelings about school. The researchers find that mentees with inappropriately matched peer mentors showed an increase in negative attitudes to school after mentoring.

### 4.2.3 Group mentoring
Two qualitative studies suggest that group mentoring may be a useful addition to one-to-one mentoring, especially for developing:
> self-regulation and social responses (Deutsch et al. 2017); and,
> improved relationships with teachers and friends (Pryce et al. 2015).

Pryce et al.'s (2015) qualitative analysis of mentors' experiences as lunch-buddies, in which mentors work with children amongst their peers during school lunch-breaks sheds light on the challenges and opportunities facing mentors when mentoring occurs in a social environment with mentees' peers also present. Some benefits are identified, for example in enhancing mentee's social status amongst peers. But this may not occur in all contexts: mentors need additional training to avoid pitfalls such as mentees not receiving adequate attention; or engaging with peers in problematic ways that increase anti-social behaviour.

### 4.2.4 School-based mentoring
The evidence as to whether mentoring is more effective as a school- or community-based programme is mixed. Erickson et al (2009) argue that school-based mentoring has greater impact than other forms of mentoring on academic results. After controlling for a wide range of factors including prior attainment and indicators of social capital, they found that students who reported having a school-based mentor during adolescence had higher academic attainment by the end of their schooling and completed more years of education overall, compare to adolescents with mentors who were not school-based.

On the other hand, Wood and Mayo-Wilson (2012) argue that school-based programmes are unlikely to produce long lasting effects, due to the shorter average duration of school-based mentoring relationships compared to community-based mentoring. Moreover, Schwartz et al (2011) concluded that school-based mentoring had a positive impact on academic attainment, but not wider outcomes. They also found that pupils' gains in academic attainment were not sustained into the next year. Others explicitly suggest that school-based mentoring is less effective across all outcomes than community-based approaches (Rhodes et al 2008, EEF 2017).

### 4.3 Intended outcomes

Our sample of programmes indicated that programmes had a number of different stated intended outcomes. Nearly three-quarters of the programmes in our sample intended to improve social and emotional outcomes. Others targeted academic outcomes; outcomes linked to careers and the workplace; a reduction in risky behaviours; or outcomes relating to physical and mental health. Nearly a third (30%; n=109) gave more than one type of intended outcome.

The literature on mentoring's effectiveness also recognises a wide variety of aims, as we set out in section 4.1. These are not mutually exclusive, and many programmes, like those in our sample, target more than one outcome. These multi-outcome approaches are not undesirable, since as DuBois et al (2011) point out there is evidence to suggest mentoring can help young people develop in a number of domains simultaneously.

This section examines the evidence relating to:
1. social and emotional outcomes;
2. academic outcomes;
3. career outcomes; and
4. outcomes relating to reducing risky behaviours.

### 4.3.1 Social and emotional outcomes

The experts we interviewed made a distinction between mentoring with a discrete, tangible aim (workplace and academic mentoring) and broader, development-orientated aims, although the literature did not make the same distinction. One UK academic believed that a clear distinction needed to be made between 'learning mentoring' and 'emotional mentoring':

*"Slow, sure and emotional mentoring… is much more to do with a whole person view of the child and their circumstances and trying to offer them support to cope with those social and emotional circumstances that they are facing."*

- UK academic

Others believed that effective mentoring programmes needed to tackle social and emotional outcomes before addressing academic or workplace related outcomes. Another UK academic described how mentoring relationships develop their focus over-time, from a starting point as a "relationship, which is around building trust and confidence and engaging with the young person on a whole range of aspects and challenges that they face", into something more focussed on employability support.

### 4.3.2 Academic outcomes

As explored in section 4.1, there are some indications that mentoring is effective in raising academic attainment. Both DuBois et al. (2011), and another meta-analysis by Eby et al. (2008) found marginally larger effect sizes for academic attainment than they did for other outcomes. The Education Endowment Foundation's toolkit on mentoring (2017), which draws on literature from the USA and UK, finds a small benefit (1 month of additional progress) on academic attainment for most pupils and a slightly larger benefit (2 months) for disadvantaged pupils.

Fruiht and Wray-Lake (2013) used a longitudinal statistical analysis to compare the effect on academic outcomes (attainment and length of time in education) of mentoring beginning at different times in a young person's life. They found that mentoring from community members was more likely to lead to

educational success when started early (before 13 years old), whereas for teacher-mentors, the greatest impact appeared to be for young people aged over 16 years old.

Despite the evidence that mentoring may result in positive academic impact, a national randomised study of school-based mentoring cautioned against a solely academic focus (Grossman et al, 2012). Grossman (ibid) found that programmes with an academic focus at the core of the mentoring relationship were more likely to lead to a breakdown in the mentoring relationship compared to those that allowed variation and choice in the activities undertaken. We assess the impact of relationship duration in section 4.5.1.

### 4.3.3 Career outcomes

While our experts and sample of provision revealed that mentoring is often used to boost the chances of employment, or to gain access to a particular career path for young people, very few studies have examined longer-term employment outcomes for young mentees (McDonald & Lambert 2014).

McDonald and Lambert (ibid.) carried out a longitudinal statistical analysis of the impact on early career outcomes of "natural" mentoring. They found that natural mentoring appears to improve attributes related to employability and early entry to the workplace. However, it does not protect from early career job insecurity or improve the likelihood of a mentee being employed by their mid-20s. Natural mentoring appears to be linked to job quality (in terms of the likelihood of pursuing intrinsically rewarding careers rather than pursuing extrinsic motivators such as pay). This is in turn associated with longer term career sustainability (ibid).

In a literature review of evidence regarding employer mentoring, Hooley (2016) concludes that some evidence exists to show a positive impact of mentoring on outcomes related to "work-readiness" (such as attitudes to work, or young peoples' feelings of hope about job prospects). However, Hooley argues that further longitudinal research is needed before a robust conclusion can be reached about mentoring programmes' impact on career outcomes.

Colley (2003) termed the phrase "engagement mentoring" to describe programmes that aim to engage young people in the formal structures of education and employment. In her view, many such programmes have failed to produce positive impacts, and in some cases were harmful. This is largely due to inappropriate programme structures whereby programme funding was attached to rigid and short-term targets. This type of programme design may lead to relationships that "can do much more harm than good, including for the mentors as well as for the young people who are being mentored" (UK academic).

### 4.3.3 Risky behaviours

Jollife and Farington (2007) reviewed 18 evaluations of youth offender mentoring programmes. In common with more general reviews of mentoring, they found small effect sizes on rates of offending with wide variation between programmes. They therefore argue that more robust evidence is needed before making a confident assessment of mentoring's impact.

Moodie and Fisher's (2009) threshold analysis of an Australian mentoring scheme for young people at risk of offending argues that - given the high cost to society of criminality, such schemes provide value for money despite fairly limited impact. Indeed, the authors claim that the programme need only avert high risk behaviours in 1.3% of participants to break even.

In addition to supporting young offenders, the literature suggests that mentoring programmes can also help reduce drug and alcohol abuse. Thomas et al (2013) carried out a systematic review of six RCTs to ascertain the effect of mentoring on reducing alcohol and drug use amongst teenagers. The authors conclude that there was some limited evidence mentoring reduced both alcohol and drug use, but that there further well-designed studies were needed to confirm this finding.

## 4.4 Success factors

This section of the report examines the aspects of mentoring programmes that the literature and our experts suggest make the greatest contribution to overall effectiveness.

The literature particularly highlights factors relating to individual mentoring relationships. Such factors include:
1. The duration of mentoring relationships.
2. Mentors recruitment.
3. Mentor training.

### 4.4.1 Duration of the mentoring relationship

Relationship duration appears to be a key driver of variation in effectiveness (Rhodes 2008, Larose et al 2015). A number of studies point to an increased likelihood of positive effects where mentoring relationships that last over a year (DuBois et al 2002, Rhodes and DuBois 2006, Herrera et al 2007, DuBois et al 2011). Furthermore, as noted in section 4.1, where relationships end early, this can have highly negative effects, particularly on vulnerable young people, children in care and those with mental health difficulties (Karcher 2005, Philip and Spratt 2007, Rhodes 2008, Wood and Mayo-Wilson 2012, Beattie et al. 2016).

Relationship duration may be of particular importance where programmes aim to deliver health and social benefits for young people. De Wit et al (2016b) suggest that these programmes need a minimum of twelve months to realise their aims.

The experts we spoke to also highlighted the potential pitfalls of programmes where the quality of relationships is not well managed. For example, one pointed out that, for vulnerable children in particular:

*"When mentoring isn't done well, it can be very detrimental... what we are discouraging is that quick, short fire, one month engagement and then off you go scenario... we want to provide a structure around this, which is very clear that this is a dedicated time that you and your mentee have. That it's regular and that you're both committed to it, and there is a start and an end point"*

- Practitioner

The literature identifies several factors that may help programmes foster enduring mentoring relationships:
> Flexible meeting times and locations, determined by the mentee, rather than the mentor or programme, were more likely to result in longer lasting relationships. Grossman et al. (2012) used regression analysis to show that programmes that required mentors to meet mentees at the same fixed, pre-defined time and location were less likely to last.

> Flexibility in the focus of meetings in mentoring relationships was also associated with longer lasting matches. Programmes that allowed the mentee to determine the agenda for meetings, and which allow flexibility in the focus of the relationship, so that meetings between mentor and mentee can be responsive to the changing developmental and emotional needs of the mentee, resulted in more durable relationships than others (Rhodes and DuBois 2008, Liang et al. 2008, Grossman et al. 2012, Brady et al. 2017).

> Basualdo-Delmonico & Spencer (2016) use qualitative data to show that parents involvement in mentoring relationships, for example in getting to know the mentor, or offering advice on what might engage the child, is valued by parents, mentors and mentees.

> De Wit et al (2016b) warn that mentees who feel extrinsic pressures to take part in a mentoring programme are more likely to end their mentoring relationship early. Programmes should therefore ensure that newly recruited mentees are willing participants in the mentoring relationship (ibid).

> > Close monitoring of relationships in their early stages of a programme is also associated with longer last relationships (DuBois et al 2002). This monitoring might include, for example, gathering both mentor and mentee ratings of their relationship through validated surveys, which may be useful in identifying relationships that are at risk of ending early (Rhodes et al. 2017).

The literature also sheds some light on the influence of potential mentors' attributes. Mentors' ability to relate to young people on their own terms is particularly importance, according to two qualitative studies. Keller and Pryce (2012) and McArthur et al (2017) both argue that programmes using or employing mentors who were highly "attuned" to the needs of young people were more likely to produce positive outcomes. Our experts argue that it is important that "mentors never lose sight of young people as individuals" (Practitioner).

One expert highlighted the difference that a mentors age can have on a relationship:

*"Mature mentors with life experience tended to build very good relationships with the kids… and young mentors who were... maybe just two or three years older than the kids who were being mentored… these were much less successful and the mentors often ended up with very pejorative ideas about the young people and the sort of communities that they came from."*

- UK academic

Recruiting mentors whose prior skills and training fits with the aims of the programme, for example through social work students being paired with children in care, may also be beneficial, although in-programme training can provide a similar function (DuBois et al. 2011).

Other factors that influence relationship duration, but which are harder to mitigate through programme design include:
> Mentees' pre-existing behavioural difficulties; and
> Gender - since girls are more likely to be in early ending mentoring relationships than boys (De Wit et al 2016b).

One academic interviewee argued that a "youth-initiated" approach, in which mentees choose their own mentors from adults known to them in their school or community, could increase young peoples' motivation to be involved:

*"The adults said to us [that] they start the relationship already feeling like they've made a difference because this young person called them out and said, "I want you to be my mentor"… a few months in, [these relationships] sounded like the small subset of community-based relationships [in other programmes] that go the distance a year and a half in. It was really striking to me, having talked to so many mentors and youth, to really hear this difference. It's not a panacea, these relationships also struggle in their own way, but we think they're really powerful, particularly for youth in care."*

- US Academic

Once a mentoring relationship has ended, programmes often seek to "re-match" young people with a different mentor. Pedersen et al (2009) found that for a typical US mentoring programme 12% of mentees are re-matched at least once, and 2% at least twice.

However, there is evidence to suggest that re-matching is unlikely to produce positive outcomes, and in some cases can lead to more negative outcomes for the young people who have been re-matched, compared to young people who were never mentored (Grossman et al 2012, De Wit 2016).

### 4.4.2 Relationship quality

The academic literature provides less evidence with regard to relationship quality than with regard to relationship duration. Rhodes et al (2017) investigated the extent to which measures of relationship quality predicted the duration of mentoring relationships. Their analysis drew on a sample of 5,000 mentoring relationships in the US, and found that mentees perceptions of closeness was the best predictor of duration. In addition, a number of qualitative studies have focussed on describing mentoring relationships in an effort to define quality within a relationship.

Spencer et al (2008) found that mentees' perceptions of the characteristics of effective mentoring relationships emphasised trust, positive identification with the mentor - often through shared interests or activities -, and role modelling. Younger mentees stressed the importance of mentors modelling positive behaviours, for example in terms of attitude, or health behaviours. Meanwhile, mentees in late adolescence placed greater value in understanding how their mentors had overcome difficulties in the past. These mentees also valued autonomy, for example being able to set their own goals, and arrange meetings on their own terms, and mutuality whereby mentees feel they their mentor can also learn from them (ibid).

Closeness and trust in mentoring relationships may be particularly important for children in care. Greeson (2013) and Spencer et al (2018) suggest that mentoring programmes that seek to match children in care with mentors they have a prior relationship with, and who have been selected by the children themselves, appear to increase both mentee trust in their mentor, and mentor commitment to the relationship.

Further research on relationship quality in mentoring programmes and how quality influences variations in effectiveness should be undertaken (Rhodes 2008; Larose et al 2015).

### 4.4.3 Mentor recruitment

Several of our interviewees highlighted difficulties recruiting suitable mentors. One UK academic argued that mentoring is "very altruistic" and that emphasising the opportunity to make a difference to "the lives of young people" is valuable in securing mentors. Another practitioner believed that national recognition could incentivise more people to mentor by appealing to people's "egos", and "celebrating the volunteer mentors."

Ensuring that programmes have a ready supply of mentors is a particular problem when it comes to supporting vulnerable young people. One study of a mentoring programme for young people in the USA with behavioural difficulties found that girls waited on average 7 months for a match, and boys an average of 12 months. Our interviewees also highlighted this issue:

*"For a young person leaving care or for a young person who's involved in the Juvenile Justice system that just makes no sense for them to sit on a waiting list.  If they've decided that they're open to getting a mentor, you know, we need to get them a mentor immediately".*

- US academic

### 4.4.4 Training for mentors

Programmes that invest in training and support for mentors are more likely to foster effective mentoring relationships. De Wit et al. (2016b) find that support for mentors in the early stages of the relationship, for example through training in techniques such as active listening, or through enlisting the support of children's parents or case-workers, for example through joint training, or shared excursions, was associated with longer lasting relationships.

All our experts highlighted the importance of preparing volunteer mentors for the role. One practitioner explained how his best decision was "revamping the training programme by getting professional trainers in". For another expert, training for mentors made the difference between effective programmes and others:

*"A model where there isn't any pre-work with young people, and where the mentors or coaches don't have really thorough training in an actual methodology… [is] weaker than programmes where they do"*

- Practitioner

Another echoed this, explaining that:

*"Often volunteer mentors are put into the role with, if they're lucky, 48 hours of training, and that's a lot… Many schemes only had four hours' training before they started and it's criminal to let people with that little training loose on kids who've got complex problems, it's just not right."*

- UK Academic

Several experts stressed the importance of ongoing support for mentors. One explained that one of the ways to "mitigate the risks" of poor mentoring relationships is to make sure that mentors are supervised: "that they know we're there to support and help and listen." (Practitioner).

## 4.5 Challenges

Finally, our expert interviewees identified a number of barriers factors facing mentoring programmes, that were not apparent in the literature. These included:

1. Safeguarding;
2. Schools' academic focus; and
3. Co-ordination.

### 4.5.1 Safeguarding

Child Protection was seen as a particular challenge for mentoring programmes:

*"There's safeguarding risks. There's reputational risks. Anything could go wrong at any point. The more you can do to safeguard yourself around those the better. DBS checking is a no-brainer but we also run rigorous workshops beforehand… so that serves as another layer of screening"*

- Practitioner

Professionals' perceptions of appropriateness may also cause problems where teachers or social workers who were used as mentors for children in care felt that they should not become too emotionally attached to their mentee:

*"Professionals are encouraged to make sure that they don't get emotionally too close to children. And really what these children actually need is that emotional closeness to someone that they feel really cares about them."*

- UK academic

Data protection laws were also highlighted as a challenge with one practitioner recounting:

*"An absolute resistance… around putting any of the young people's data onto our platform. So, all we can collate is… the mentors' assessments and impacts, and then, [we are] depending on the third party organisation, to give us the young people's data."*

- Practitioner

### 4.5.2 Schools' focus

One expert identified schools being overly focused on accountability measures as another challenge:

*"One of the problems is drawing a line between what schools think is their role and looking after the whole child, and I think schools would say that part of the problems they face at the moment is there's such a pressure on schools to focus on attainment targets, that it's very, very hard for them to provide the level of provision in other areas of what they do."*

- UK academic

### 4.5.3 Co-ordination

Quality assurance across the large range of organisations providing mentoring for young people was highlighted as another challenge by two experts. Both argued that government should support organisations by promoting a quality framework for mentoring, as well as providing funding and incentives to support more young people.

*"There are quite a lot of small charities reinventing the wheel, not doing it terribly well. So, I think push accreditation in every organisation. [Organisations] should be insisting on interviews,*

*mentoring offender accreditation, for example. That's my big plea. Yes, more money, but actually give it to the organisations who are really going to run it well".*

<div align="right">-     Practitioner</div>

*"I think having a national framework of what good mentoring looks like is important, where rather than relying on bit part knowledge of one individual … you have good established framework for sharing good practice".*

<div align="right">-     Practitioner</div>

## 4.6 Summary of findings from the literature and expert interviews

> Attempts to quantify the effect of mentoring in general terms reveal modest positive impact, with clearer impact on academic attainment than on social or emotional development.

> There is some evidence from meta-analyses that the likelihood of a positive effect of mentoring is higher for some disadvantaged young people, although this is balanced against a need for caution identified elsewhere in the literature, given that unsuccessful mentoring relationships may lead to harmful effects.

> Longer lasting mentoring relationships are associated with positive outcomes, while relationships that fall apart during the programme are likely to be particularly damaging for vulnerable children and children in care in particular.

> Programmes that are flexible, provide support and training for mentors, allow for child-led agendas, ensure that mentees are willing participants, and involve parents, are more likely to foster enduring relationships.

# 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Mentoring is a widely used intervention in England, particularly with teenagers. Our sample contained a higher proportion of mentoring programmes in London than in the rest of the country, while programmes, to the extent that we were able to locate them, were more scarce in the East Midlands and North East of England.

Over half of the programmes in our sample explicitly targeted vulnerable young people. On the other hand, only a quarter of programmes in our sample stated that they targeted "disadvantaged" young people, which is perhaps surprising given policy makers' focus on disadvantage. Programmes deployed a mix of volunteer and paid mentors, and most were community-based. The programmes in our sample reported a range of aims. Most often, programmes sought to support mentees' social and emotional development, although a notable proportion targeted more tangible outcomes such as academic attainment. Programmes aimed at younger mentees placed slightly more emphasis on academic, as well as social and emotional improvements, while those aimed at older mentees placed relatively more emphasis on workplace outcomes. Many programmes aimed to improve outcomes for mentees across a number of domains.

Given mentoring's popularity as an intervention, it is important to understand what the evidence tells us about its effectiveness, and how programmes can maximise their positive impact with young people. The evidence base for mentoring is developing. While there is still a need for more well-designed studies in the UK to confirm findings from the mentoring literature in the US, the evidence overall is stronger than it was a decade ago. Overall there are promising signs that the average youth mentoring programme has a small but positive effect on the average mentee. However, there is no guarantee that mentoring will be effective and there are risks of negative effects. The literature, and the experts we spoke to, suggest that this is particularly the case for vulnerable children such as those in care, or those with troubled home lives. Yet, these are often the very children mentoring programmes are most likely to target. Relationships that end prematurely may be particularly damaging and the literature suggests that school-based mentoring programmes, which are sometimes constrained by the academic year, should be deployed with particular care when they involve vulnerable young people.

A mixture of statistical and qualitative literature, reinforced by the views of our expert interviewees, confirm the central importance of mentoring relationships being long lasting. However, less is known about other aspects of relationship quality. More evidence has emerged in recent years about how relationship duration, along with programme structure, affects the success of individual mentoring relationships.

Programmes are more likely to give rise to longer lasting, effective relationships when they:
> Prepare mentors and mentees beforehand, through training and clear expectations of the relationship;
> Take a flexible approach to their mentoring agenda, allowing the young person's needs and interests to come to the fore;
> Ensure that the young people embarking on the programme are motivated and prepared to take part, and do not feel pressured into a mentoring relationship;
> Provide ongoing support and training for mentors, particularly in preparing mentors for the reality of working with vulnerable teenagers and training in techniques to develop listening and empathy; and

> Ensure that parents are involved in the programme, and that they have opportunities to get to know their child's mentor.

This report recognises that mentoring programmes are well-established in England. Programmes vary from those operating at a national level, to those that are local in scale and run by small organisations. As a result, capacity and expertise is likely to vary widely.
There is a danger of mentoring programmes continually "reinventing the wheel" and that an opportunity to learn from practice and evidence is lost. This report therefore makes a number of recommendations that are intended to support the provision of high quality mentoring, particularly for vulnerable young people.

## 5.1 Recommendations

> Programmes must ensure they are well-versed in current evidence. What Works centres, Government and organisations in the sector should consider developing an online resource for mentoring programmes and practitioners, where mentoring research can be collected and summarised.

> Programmes should be evaluated as rigorously as possible. Depending on size and budget, programmes should consider being part of RCTs for larger, national-scale projects. Smaller programmes might also seek to partner with research organisations to understand their impact better, and add to the research base for mentoring.

> Where possible, programmes should adhere to the central concepts of relationship duration and support for mentors.

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# Appendix One

**Search terms for literature review:**
Consistent filter
Published time range 2007-2017 (present)
Language: English

**Group 1 (focussed search terms)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mentoring AND vulnerable AND (young OR child*) | 37 |
| Mentoring AND "children in care" | 0 |
| Mentoring AND "care leavers" AND (young OR child*) | 6 |
| Mentoring AND "looked after children" | 4 |
| Mentoring AND "at risk" AND (young OR child*) | 81 |
| Mentoring AND child* AND trauma | 41 |
| Mentoring AND child* AND dislocation | 1 |
| Mentoring AND "special education" | 43 |
| Mentoring AND "alternative provision" | 0 |

**Group 2 (wider range of vulnerable groups)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mentoring AND "young offenders" | 5 |
| Mentoring AND attainment AND (young OR child*) | 23 |
| Mentoring AND school AND progress | 101 |
| Mentoring AND educ AND progress | 1 |

**Group 3 (all young people)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mentoring AND young | 870 |
| Mentoring AND educ* (refined with effective*) | 340 |
| Mentoring AND child* | 993 |

# Appendix Two

*[Public authority contact details]*

Dear *[enter name],*

I am writing to make an open government request for all the information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**Background:**

The education and youth "think and action tank" LKMco are developing a national picture of the provision of programmes involving mentoring of young people. We are interested in any programmes containing features of mentoring that support young people in your authority. This provision might encompass a variety of models of mentoring practice, for example including:

- one-to-one coaching from professional mentors;
- volunteer befriending models;
- or peer mentoring in small groups.

We are interested in the full range of provision for young people in your authority; across the schools, youth, care sectors or wider.

We are also keen to understand the intended impact of such programmes, and whether particular groups of young people, for example vulnerable groups such as children in care or those with SEND, are targeted in mentoring provision.

**The request:**

Please send me:

1. **A list of any programmes you have delivered, overseen or funded which involve the mentoring of young people in your local authority over the last two years.**

2. **For each programme, whether the programme targets a specific group of young people and if so which groups are targeted in each programme.**

3. **What the stated aims, objectives or intended impact of each programme is.**

I would like the above information to be provided to me electronically.

If this request is too wide or unclear, I would be grateful if you could contact me as I understand that under the Act, you are required to advise and assist requesters. If any of this information is already in the public domain, please can you direct me to it, with page references and URLs if necessary.

If the release of any of this information is prohibited on the grounds of breach of confidence, I ask that you supply me with copies of the confidentiality agreement and remind you that information should not be treated as confidential if such an agreement has not been signed.

I understand that you are required to respond to my request within the 20 working days after you receive this letter. I would be grateful if you could confirm in writing that you have received this request.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

*[name]*

# Appendix Three

**Introduction to the research**

LKMco have been commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner to evaluate the impact of mentoring on young people.

We are conducting a literature review and talking to a variety of experts in the field. The research will help to bring together best practice in mentoring on young people.

**What does the research involve?**

We would like to conduct a short interview with you. It should take around 30 minutes of your time.

**How we will store and use your data**

> Your interview will be recorded and transcribed.

> We will analyse your transcript alongside others in order to feed into our final report.

> The recording and transcript from your interview will be stored securely, and your name will not be revealed to people outside the project. When the data are no longer required, they will be destroyed.

> We may use quotes from your interview in our final report and other research outputs such as websites and blogs, but we will not use your name.

> We may share data from your interview with other genuine researchers and store our data in an archive so that genuine researchers can see what you said in future. Your name and other personal information will not be stored, and other researchers will only be allowed access to your data if they agree to keep it confidential.

> You can ask to see your data at any time, and you can also ask for us to destroy your data at any time if you want us to. Please contact Sam Baars (sam@lkmco.org).

**Who can I contact for more information?**

If you want more information about the research and what your participation will involve, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Bart Shaw, Senior Associate, LKMco at bart@lkmco.org

**What do I do next?**

We really hope you will be able to help us by agreeing to take part in an interview. However your participation is voluntary and you don't have to give a reason if you choose not to participate.

If you are happy to interviewed please sign the attached consent form.

**Mentoring consent form**

Please tick either 'Yes' or 'No' for each statement.

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| I have read and understood the information sheet. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I agree to take part in interview. I understand that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary: I can withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I understand that I may be quoted in the final research report and other research outputs such as websites and blogs without my name being used. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I understand that my data will be stored securely for as long as LKMco consider it to be useful for research purposes. I can ask to see my data, or for it to be destroyed, at any time. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I agree for my data to be archived for future researchers. I understand that my name and personal details will not be archived, and other researchers will have to keep my information confidential. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I understand that my personal details will not be shared outside the research team. | ☐ | ☐ |

Name (please print):      _____

Organisation:              _____

Signature:                  _____

Date:                          _____

**Interview schedule for academics**

1. Please could you tell me about your research background in mentoring for young people/vulnerable young people?
   - please describe what your research involved (prompts: focus of study/type of mentoring/ type of study/indication of methodology

2. Are you working on any research at the moment in terms of mentoring for young people/vulnerable young people?
   - If so please describe?
   - Are there any emerging findings you could share?

3. What are the most important pieces of research into mentoring for vulnerable young people, either in the UK or internationally, of which you are aware?
   - If so what have been the key points you have taken away from the research?

4. How useful do you believe mentoring is for young people/vulnerable young people?
   - Are there models of mentoring practice that are more/less effective than others?
   - Are there groups of young people for whom mentoring can be more/less effective?
   - What are useful elements of mentoring? What is essential to success?
   - What are the risks involved, or the less useful elements?
   - What are the main reasons for ineffective mentoring?
   - What are the key sources for these perspectives?

5. Are there any ways in which mentoring provision for young people/vulnerable young people can be improved?
   - Is there a role for government?
   - Local government?
   - Other providers of mentoring?
   - Other organisations that work with young people/vulnerable young people eg schools?

6. Can you recommend other people we should talk to?


**Interview schedule for practitioners**

1. What is your background/experience in/of mentoring for young people/vulnerable young people?
   - What mentoring programmes have you been involved in, or worked with, that are targeted at young people/vulnerable young people?
   - What did each of these programmes involve?
   - What was your role in these programmes?

2. Are you involved in the delivery any programmes at the moment that include mentoring for young people/vulnerable young people?

3. Are the mentoring programmes you have been involved in evaluated, for example for impact, success factors, or value for money?
   - What are the key findings of those evaluations?

- What, if anything has been positive?
- What has been less positive?

4. Are you aware of any research into mentoring for vulnerable young people, either in the UK or internationally?
   - If so what have been the key points you have taken away from the research?

5. How useful do you believe mentoring is for young people/vulnerable young people?
   - Are there models of mentoring practice that are more/less effective than others?
   - Are there groups of young people for whom mentoring can be more/less effective?
   - What are useful elements of mentoring?
   - What are the risks involved, or the less useful elements?

6. Are there any ways in which mentoring provision for young people/vulnerable young people can be improved?
   - Is there a role for government?
   - Local government?
   - Other providers of mentoring?
   - Other organisations that work with young people/vulnerable young people, e.g. schools?

7. Can you recommend other people we should talk to?