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MCR PATHWAYS

MCR Pathways Social Bridging Finance Initiative for Educational Outcomes

Evaluation Report

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Foreword

The Robertson Trust has long been committed to working with organisations that help young people in our society who face barriers to succeeding at school and achieving their potential. We know that closing the attainment gap is above all about investment in young people themselves. An investment of time, of emotional support, of compassion. An investment that allows young people to find their own path but with the right support structure behind them.

The Trust, in partnership with the Life Changes Trust and the STV Appeal, began working with the MCR Foundation and MCR Pathways in 2015 to support the expansion of their mentoring programme for care-experienced and disadvantaged young people in Glasgow beyond the initial pilot schools. To do this we employed our developing Social Bridging Finance model to ensure commitment from Glasgow City Council to sustaining the programme once it had been shown that the objectives were being met. In the event the trial was so successful that the programme was rolled out across Glasgow before the outcomes had been independently evaluated, a tribute to the power of the MCR approach to make a tangible difference to the young people involved and Glasgow's commitment to ensuring the success of its young people.

The funding partners have now moved on to supporting MCR in rolling out its work across Scotland, leaving an embedded and vibrant programme running in every secondary school in Glasgow supported by hundreds of volunteer mentors and their MCR Co-ordinators.

In support of this expansion, we are proud to present the report of the independent evaluation of MCR's programme in Glasgow. This major study by ScotCen looked at the quantitative, qualitative and cost-benefit evidence on the impact of the programme and reaches some important conclusions. In this report the quantitative and qualitative findings are presented. The cost-benefit analysis conducted by RAND Europe will be published separately.

This independent evaluation has shown that MCR Pathways participants are significantly more likely to stay on at school, much more likely to achieve at least one qualification at SCQF Level 5 and more likely to move on to a positive post-school destination than equivalent young people not supported by the programme. MCR mentors help young people to develop their study skills, increase their confidence, manage their stress and develop goals and aspirations. In other words, to be mentored through MCR is a life-changing experience on a number of levels.

The study also shows that MCR are leading the way in mentor training and matching, with the independence and non-judgmental nature of the mentoring being a key success factor in helping young people to engage.

These findings add up to a significant positive impact on young people with care-experience and other forms of potential disadvantage. The positive behaviours that MCR mentors help their young people to develop will carry through into their working lives and the study shows clearly that the programme gave them the confidence to overcome obstacles and pursue their ambitions.

The commitment of the Trust and its partners to support MCR in their work is shown by our ongoing support for the national rollout. We are pleased to present this report as evidence of our confidence that as the programme gains traction across the country, more and more lives will be changed for the better by its highly effective approach.

Kenneth Ferguson
Director
The Robertson Trust

Key findings

- The evaluation has shown that care-experienced young people in Glasgow have experienced a number of educational improvements as a result of their participation in MCR Pathways. The findings clearly indicate that MCR Pathways participants were more likely than care experienced non-participants to stay on at school, achieve one SCQF level 5 qualification and move on to a positive destination after leaving school.
- MCR Pathways mentored care-experienced young people in Glasgow have exceeded the targets set in the Social Bridging Finance initiative for levels of retention at school after school leaving age; attainment; and moving on to a positive destination after leaving school. There were statistically significant differences between the outcomes of care-experienced young people who were mentored and care-experienced young people who were not mentored:
  - 70.6% of mentored pupils continued their education in S5 compared with 60.1% of their non-mentored peers.
  - 87.8% of mentored pupils achieved at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification compared with 66.8% of their non-mentored peers.
  - 81.6% of mentored pupils went on to a positive destination compared with 56.3% of their non-mentored peers.
- The support provided by mentors to address some of the underlying reasons for young people's non-attendance at school, and young people's interest and motivation to attend regular meetings with their mentors, helped improve the attendance of young people who had poor attendance prior to taking part in MCR Pathways.
- The personalised process of matching mentors with mentees based on similar interests, personality and / or life experience was a key factor that contributed to the success of the programme.
- The quality and format of the mentor training was also identified as a key success factor, providing mentors with the knowledge and tools they needed to be a mentor.
- Arranging meeting times that fitted in with the young person's and mentor's timetables was a challenge experienced in some settings. Where this was found to be the case some addressed the challenge by arranging meetings in advance and choosing to meet during free periods, double periods or during classes without exams.
- Mentors supported young people with their post school destinations by: helping young people think about options based on their skills and interests; providing opportunities to explore various career options; providing guidance to pursue their chosen career path; and helping with college and job applications.
- Young people reported that the mentoring programme helped them build their confidence and improve their social skills. Mentors also helped improve young people's self-esteem by supporting young people to identify and overcome challenges.
- Mentors being independent from the school was another important factor which helped young people engage in the programme. Young people felt mentors had no agenda and were non-judgmental.

- Mentors helped young people improve their academic performance by helping them develop their study skills, increase their confidence, manage exam-related stress and develop goals and aspirations to work towards.

Executive summary

Introduction

MCR Pathways is a school-based mentoring programme for care-experienced and disadvantaged young people which aims to improve young people's school attendance and participation, educational attainment and post-school positive destinations. A mixed method evaluation was undertaken to identify and understand the impact participating in MCR Pathways' mentoring programme has on the attendance, attainment and post school destinations for care-experienced young people, and the extent to which MCR Pathways achieved Social Bridging Finance Targets.

Quantitative findings

The comparison of the proportion of care-experienced pupils who were part of MCR Pathways with positive outcomes with those who were not part of the programme showed statistically significant differences between the outcomes of these two groups. These findings clearly indicate that MCR Pathways participants were more likely to stay on at school, achieve at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification and move on to a positive destination after leaving school.

To account for differences in characteristics between mentored and non-mentored pupils, Propensity Score Matching (PSM) analysis was conducted. Overall, the impact estimates produced in the PSM analysis show that MCR Pathways does have a positive impact on its participants, with statistically significant positive impacts being recorded for all three outcomes examined: staying on at school, attainment and moving forward to a positive destination after school. In addition, mentored care-experienced young people in Glasgow have far exceeded the targets set in the Social Bridging Finance initiative for levels of retention at school after school leaving age; attainment; and moving on to a positive destination after leaving school.

- 70.6% of mentored pupils continued their education in S5, 10.5 percentage points higher than other young people in care, or previously in care, in Glasgow who had not been mentored.
- 87.8% of mentored pupils achieved at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification, 21.0 percentage points higher than their non-mentored peers.
- On leaving school, 81.6% of mentored pupils went on to a positive destination, 25.3 percentage points higher than their non-mentored peers.

The main caveats for these results are the low sample sizes and the subsequent low power of the study, meaning the impact estimates had relatively large confidence intervals. For example, whilst the difference in the likelihood of continuing their education to S5 between mentored and non-mentored pupils is *estimated* at 10.5 percentage points, the true value of the difference is between 1.9 and 19.2 percentage points. Similarly, the difference in achieving at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification is estimated to be between 11.7 and 30.4 percentage points, and for leaving school to a positive destination is between 15.3 and 35.3 percentage points.

Thus despite the statistically significant positive impact of the programme, there is some statistical uncertainty about the magnitude of the impact.

Qualitative findings

Qualitative interviews were carried out with the young people engaged in MCR Pathways, their mentors and teachers. The interviews were carried out in two phases: phase 1 (April/May 2018) included interviews with S5 and S6 pupils, teachers and mentors from 2 schools who were being mentored in the 2017/18 academic year; phase 2 (November/December 2018) included S5 and S6 pupils, teachers and mentors in 3 schools who were being mentored in the 2018/19 academic year. Thirty interviews were completed with people who were involved in the MCR Pathways mentoring programme. These were: 15 pupils currently on the programme; 5 former pupils; 6 mentors; and 4 MCR link teachers.

Attendance
Young people who had poor attendance prior to participating in MCR Pathways mentoring programme felt that having a mentor had improved their attendance. These young people enjoyed meeting with their mentor, so they were motivated to attend school regularly to go to their weekly mentoring meeting.

Mentors also helped the young people build self-confidence, which in turn helped them address some of the underlying reasons for non-attendance at school, such as difficult relationships with their family. By having the confidence to tackle issues with their families, relationships improved which in turn had a positive impact on young people's attendance. Mentors also helped young people to develop positive behaviours such as: discipline, responsibility and reliability. These are behaviours that changed young people's attitude to school and they have continued to apply these behaviours outside school, giving them a sense of pride.

Attainment
Many young people felt that having a mentor had improved their academic performance. Mentors helped young people improve their attainment by:

- helping young people with school work;
- developing young people's study skills (e.g. study plans, exam preparations, memory and concentration techniques);
- increasing their confidence so they could ask for help in school; and
- helping young people manage exam-related stress.

Having a mentor also changed young people's attitude towards school work and exams. Mentors helped young people to develop goals and career aspirations; having a purpose or a goal that they could work towards made young people want to do better in school. Pupils also noted that receiving constant encouragement from their mentors and positive feedback from teachers regarding their attainment provided them with the confidence and the motivation to do well. Even among those who had not experienced a noticeable change in their grades there was a feeling that, since having a mentor, they were better able to grasp and understand subjects they had previously found difficult.

Positive destinations
Mentors have had a positive impact on young people's future destinations in a number of different ways. For some young people, having a mentor helped them decide to stay on at school for 5th and/or 6th year and it was also noted that support from their mentor had helped them get through difficult times that may have otherwise resulted in them leaving school after 4th year. Young people said their mentors helped them plan their post school destinations by:

- helping them think about options based on their skills and interests;
- providing opportunities to explore various career options and expand their potential options for the future; and
- providing guidance to pursue their chosen career path. Mentors also helped young people pursue further education or employment by helping young people with interview techniques and college, university and job applications.

Before having a mentor, young people described feeling limited by how other people would view their potential career choices, whether that be due to the type of career they wanted or because the messages they had received up to that point made them feel that certain routes were not open to them. Young people felt that their mentor gave them confidence to overcome obstacles and pursue their aspirations.

Additional benefits for young people

In addition to improvements in attendance, attainment and positive destinations there were a range of other benefits that young people gained from taking part in the MCR Pathways mentoring programme. This included increased confidence and improved social skills which enabled young people to have their voices heard, take part in new opportunities, develop new friendships, and improve existing relationships with their family and other adults. Having a mentor also provided young people with independent, non-judgmental emotional and practical support. Having a mentor to talk to made young people feel more positive about the future and motivated to keep going through difficult times. Mentors supported young people to identify and overcome challenges which helped them realise their capabilities, which in turn improved their self-esteem.

Challenges and facilitators

The most frequently identified challenge in the mentoring programme was arranging suitable meeting times that fitted in with the young person's and mentor's timetables. Where this was found to be the case some addressed the challenge by arranging meetings in advance and choosing to meet during free periods, double periods or during classes without exams. Some mentors found it challenging at times to rearrange missed meetings as communication between mentors and mentees was facilitated through MCR Coordinators which could make rearranging meetings quite time consuming. A new process to enable quicker communication has subsequently been implemented by MCR.

A number of factors contributed to the effectiveness of the mentoring programme. Mentors being independent from the school was important to young people and helped them engage in the programme. Young people felt mentors had no agenda and were non-judgmental. Using a matching process that was personalised, matching people on similar interests, personality and / or life experience was seen as successful and enabled young people and mentors to build rapport and a trusting relationship. Not all matches worked the first time, but such incidences were infrequent and suitable matches were subsequently found.

Mentor experience

Being involved in the mentoring programme had a positive impact on mentors too. Some said their mentoring meetings were the highlight of their week and for some it opened their eyes to the experiences of young people in care. Mentors praised the mentoring training they received stating it was clear, well-structured and was led by quality trainers. Mentors particularly valued the hands-on group work and input from former mentees and mentors who shared their experience of being involved in the programme. On the whole, mentors felt the mentor training provided them with the knowledge and tools they needed to be a mentor, though some still found being a mentor challenging at times. Mentors suggested ways of improving the training which included:

- providing new mentors with an overview of the current school system (as some may be unfamiliar with it);
- provide training for all mentors on the college and university application process (so they can better support young people);
- improve clarity on the time commitment of being a mentor (one hour session plus travel time);
- provide more information on child protection; and
- tailor ongoing training and events towards the experience of the mentor.

A number of these suggestions have subsequently been implemented by MCR.

Conclusions

Overall, both the qualitative and quantitative data have shown that MCR Pathways' mentoring programme has had a positive impact on the educational outcomes for care-experienced young people. MCR Pathways was shown to have a statistically significant, positive impact on all three quantitative outcomes. The mentoring programme has:

- improved attainment by increasing the proportion of care-experienced young people who are achieving at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification.
- helped young people to stay on at school (after school leaving age).
- supported young people move on to positive destinations of college, university or employment.

Interviews with young people, mentors and teachers illustrated the ways in which the mentoring programme has contributed to improvements in young people's school attendance and attainment and how it has helped young people move on to positive destinations. In addition, having a mentor has improved young people's confidence, self-esteem and social skills and provided them with a source of emotional and practical support that was independent from school and their family.

1 Introduction

1.1 MCR Pathways

MCR Pathways is a school-based mentoring programme that supports those in or on the edges of the care system and those facing other forms of disadvantage to realise their full potential through education. The charity was founded in 2007 by Iain MacRitchie, who identified a need to support disadvantaged young people in Glasgow. MCR Pathways recognised that care-experienced children often struggle in their educational journey as a result of circumstances beyond their control such as being moved from home, school or separated from their families. MCR Pathways was developed to offer young people a dedicated one-to-one relationship using volunteer mentors, which focused on supporting young people to find their talents through education and to grow, develop and use them. The model was developed over a 5-year period to include 6 pilot schools in Glasgow. The 6 pilot schools were chosen as 73% of their pupils lived in the most deprived 15% of Scotland's postcodes. The programme was initially focused on Glasgow because it has the largest proportion of looked after children with 23% (3,674) of Scotland's total Looked After Children.

The MCR Pathways model is to recruit, train and match volunteer mentors with young people. Each school has a paid Pathways Coordinator who helps match the volunteer mentors to the young people and provides support to both mentor and young person as well as providing liaison with school staff and a link to the central MCR office. The central office provides mentor recruitment, training and development, monitors the progress of the young people and arranges any specialist support required in collaboration with the schools. Prior to entering the mentoring programme at S3, S1 and S2 pupils work with their Pathways Coordinator and participate in weekly group work sessions. These are focused on building confidence and life skills, and also improving literacy and numeracy levels. This allows the Coordinator to build trust and an individual relationship with each young person, preparing them for mentoring. In addition to the core mentoring approach, MCR deliver the Talent Tasters programme which arranges employers to deliver interactive sessions with the young people and also provides workplace visits and other insights into different industries to help the young people focus on the careers they would like to follow. This programme is centrally managed with local delivery through the Pathways Coordinators. Talent Tasters is not restricted to young people who have opted for an MCR mentor and is open to all in scope young people in the relevant year group.

1.2 Purpose of evaluation

MCR Pathways was set up in one school in 2007 to 2012 and extended across six schools from 2013. The evaluation of MCR Pathways aims to inform decisions on the future of the programme through the analysis of administrative data and qualitative

interviews with participants in the programme, their mentors and teaching School Links.[1]

MCR Pathways was piloted in Glasgow from 2013. In 2015 a Social Bridging Finance Initiative (SBF) was established to run for three-years (April 2016 - March 2019). It was aimed at expanding the MCR Pathways model, which consists of individual-based mentoring for secondary school aged disadvantaged children and care-experienced young people, embedding the model as 'business as usual' in schools covered by Glasgow City Council. MCR Pathways is aimed at improving a number of outcomes for care-experienced and disadvantaged young people, specifically:

- school attendance and participation
- educational attainment
- retention from 4th year into 5th year
- reaching/sustaining positive destinations after leaving school.

The Social Bridging Finance originally supported MCR Pathways to deliver in a core of ten Glasgow secondary schools and then supported the extension of the programme on a phased basis to all 30 secondary schools in Glasgow City Council's remit.

The purpose of the evaluation is:

1. To identify and understand any changes in educational outcomes and post school destinations for young people as a result of MCR Pathways mentoring, to influence and inform potential replication elsewhere.

2. To verify the extent to which MCR Pathways achieved pre-determined educational targets ('Social Bridging Finance Targets'), in order to inform Glasgow City Council's decision to sustain funding post-2019.

The evaluation focuses on the difference made to young people's educational outcomes by asking the following questions:

1. To what extent did young people experience educational improvements as a result of their participation in MCR Pathways? Specifically:
    - higher levels of attainment
    - retention at school from 4th year into 5th year
    - and in particular, reach and sustain positive destinations after leaving school (further education, higher education or employment)
2. Was MCR Pathways mentoring more effective for some groups of young people more than others?
3. What were the enablers or barriers that influenced the achievement of educational outcomes?

[1] School Links are teachers who are the main point of contact between the school and the MCR Pathways programme.

4. To what extent were the specific Social Bridging Finance Targets (for engagement, attainment and destinations) reached? How does this fit in the context of local/national benchmarks?

In addition, there was a fifth research question exploring what the economic costs and benefits accruing from the achievement of educational outcomes are. The cost-benefit analysis of MCR Pathways, undertaken by RAND Europe,[2] will be published in a separate report in 2020. This part of the evaluation seeks to understand if the financial benefits for participating young people outweigh the cost of delivering the programme.

1.3 Background and aims

MCR's aim, supported by the Social Bridging Finance Initiative, is to improve the educational outcomes of care-experienced and disadvantaged young people in Glasgow. The evaluation includes the use of quantitative analysis and findings from qualitative interviews with: young people who are being, or who have previously been, mentored; mentors; and teachers. The focus of this evaluation is to specifically explore what impact the MCR Pathways programme has on the educational outcomes of its participants. This evaluation is not about how the programme works or its processes.

The report starts by seeking to address two of the key questions for the evaluation:

- To what extent were the specific Social Bridging Finance Targets (for engagement, attainment and destinations) reached?
- To what extent did young people experience educational improvements as a result of their participation in MCR Pathways?

The evaluation seeks to address these two research questions by analysing quantitative data about those participating in the MCR Pathways programme and other eligible care-experienced young people in Glasgow.

The first section of the report covers the findings from this quantitative analysis, starting with a description of whether the Social Bridging Finance targets have been met by those care-experienced young people who are part of the MCR Pathways programme. The second question is answered by first, describing the characteristics of the mentored group of young people and comparing this to the non-mentored groups. Then a quantitative impact evaluation was conducted, using Propensity Score Matching method, which is described in full in Chapter 3. A summary of the overall quantitative findings is provided in Chapter 4.

The second section of the report describes the findings from the qualitative interviews. To gain a detailed understanding of the changes in educational outcomes and post school destinations for young people, as a result of MCR Pathways mentoring, qualitative interviews were carried out with the young people engaged in MCR Pathways, their mentors and School Links (teachers). The qualitative findings give us

[2] RAND Europe is a not-for-profit research organisation that helps to improve policy and decision making through research and analysis.

valuable insights into the mechanisms, barriers and facilitators for improved educational outcomes in young people.

The topics covered in the interviews included:

- How MCR Pathways supports improved attendance for young people
- How MCR Pathways supports increased educational attainment for young people
- How MCR Pathways supports positive destinations for young people
- Identifying barriers and enablers to improved outcomes for young people

Non-educational outcomes for young people such as self-esteem, wellbeing aspirations or motivation and feedback on the general experience of the MCR Pathways programme were out with the scope of this project as these topics are being explored through other research projects. However, a number of additional outcomes were spontaneously raised by interview participants and are thus presented in this report.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Quantitative data sources

Data for the MCR Pathways evaluation was provided to ScotCen by the MCR Pathways team. Data was provided for all young people deemed to be eligible for the programme at state-funded, mainstream secondary schools within Glasgow. To be eligible, individuals needed to fall into one of three categories: be in care (at home or away from home), have previously been in care, or be disadvantaged. This final group was not considered as part of this impact evaluation because disadvantaged young people (who were not in care or previously in care) were identified by criteria that was unable to be identified in the comparator group. Disadvantaged young people were not identified as a separate group in non-participating schools, which prevented the identification of a suitable matched comparison group.

The data provided by MCR pathways included three years of data about individuals from 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. This included data on pupils attendance, attainment and their characteristics at various stages of education, from S3 through to S6. Information was also included that could be used to calculate the propensity scores, which show whether pupils were likely to take part in MCR Pathways, or not, such as whether the young person was in receipt of free school meals. This is an integral part of the Propensity Score Matching method used for the impact analysis discussed in Chapter 3.

The information provided covered a number of individual level characteristics, such as programme eligibility (in care currently or previously), gender, ethnicity and Free School Meal (FSM) receipt. These various characteristics are discussed in Section 3.3 below.

The individual level data was supplemented with school-level information. School-level information is particularly important in the context of this evaluation, as the 'phase in' design initially targeted the schools most in need in order that they received the intervention earlier. Those schools which received the programme first were different to

those schools who received the programme later, for example, the initial schools had higher rates of young people with free school meals and lower levels of educational attainment. This could therefore potentially impact on the expected outcomes of looked after young people attending these two groups of schools, making a straight comparison of outcomes for pupils who are part of the MCR Pathways and those who are not misleading. The purpose of the PSM is to attempt to remove these effects of sample selection, allowing a more robust, 'like-for-like' comparison. School-level data included, but was not limited to, the proportion of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals and the proportion of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). This school-level data is also discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

1.4.2 Qualitative interviews

The qualitative interviews were carried out in two phases, so that the second set of interviews could, if need be, be amended to reflect any issues that had emerged from the quantitative analysis stage. The two phases were:

- Phase 1: April/May 2018 – included interviews with pupils who were being mentored in the 2017/18 academic year, were in either S5 or S6 and who were, therefore, potentially at the stage of considering their post-school destinations. During this phase, interviews with mentors and teachers from the same schools were also conducted.

- Phase 2: November/December 2018 – included interviews with pupils who were being mentored in the 2018/19 academic year, were in either S5 or S6 but who were at a different stage in their education/future planning than the Phase 1 participants. During this phase, mentored young people who had left school, mentors and teachers were also interviewed.

Two schools were selected for Phase 1 interviews and 3 schools for Phase 2 on the basis of when the MCR Pathways programme started operating in that school and the number of eligible pupils in the sample. Three schools were chosen that started with the programme in 2015, one that had started in 2016 and one that started in 2017.

1.4.3 Recruitment of interview participants

Anonymised pupil level data for all schools involved in the programme was provided by MCR Pathways, including school, year, gender, care-experienced status, number of meetings with mentor, additional MCR Pathways activities taken part in, and educational attainment. The qualitative sample for mentee interviews was drawn from the anonymised data sent by MCR Pathways. From each school, participants in S5 or S6 plus post school leavers (Next Steps) who had taken part in 12 or more mentor sessions were selected.

Access to the mentees (past and present) was gained through MCR Pathways and the MCR Coordinator. ScotCen sent the pupil ID numbers for the mentees who were to be invited to take part in an interview to MCR Pathways who provided the coordinators with a list of pupils to invite. All potential interviewees received an invite letter, a young person information sheet, a parent/carer information sheet to take home and a consent form. The materials clearly stated that they did not have to take part and that not doing

so would in no way affect their involvement in MCR Pathways. Informed consent was gained from both the young person and their parent or carer using an opt-in consent form which was given to the young person. Only those who returned the consent form signed by both themselves and a parent or carer were contacted about taking part in an interview.

In phase 1 (April/May 2018), consent forms were received from exactly the number of pupils from each school that we planned to interview (n=7), so we did not need to carry out any further sampling and all of those who gave consent were interviewed. In phase 2, we selected 28 pupils from 4 schools and 13 consented to be interviewed. We selected 8 pupils at random to invite to be interviewed, checking that we had a gender mix and that the number of sessions they had already had with their mentors varied. In total 15 current pupils were interviewed. In phase 2, mentored young people who had left school were recruited using the same methodology. Five interviews with young people who had left school took place.

The School Link teacher from each school and all MCR Pathways mentors of pupils in S5 and S6 in the selected schools were invited to take part in an interview. Of the mentors who contacted the research team to express interest in taking part, 6 were selected at random, contacted and invited to be interviewed. Four link teachers were interviewed. Mentors and teachers received an invite letter and a teacher/mentor information sheet. The mentors and teachers opted in to the interviews and were asked to give recorded verbal consent to participate at the start of the interview.

All participants were asked at the start of the interview if they were happy to have their interviews recorded. All participants consented to the interview being digitally recorded.

1.4.4 Strengths and limitations

There are strengths and limitations to any research methodology.

For this project, the quantitative evaluation benefits from, and is strengthened by, drawing its sample from all care-experienced young people in Glasgow and therefore the intervention and control groups will already share many characteristics even prior to matching. However, the matching model does not contain prior attainment, which could be considered a key predictor of future outcomes and this is a limitation to this analysis. An additional limitation is the sample size, which is relatively small, though this is to be expected as the number of care-experienced young people in Glasgow is finite. As a consequence, the study has low statistical power and hence the confidence intervals around impact estimates are relatively large. It was not possible to analyse outcomes separately for specific sub-groups to determine whether MCR Pathways mentoring was more effective for some groups of young people than others. The statistical power of such an analysis would be too low to match individuals robustly and provide an estimate of impact.

The strength of qualitative research is that it enables in-depth exploration of a topic, in this case the impact that participating in MCR Pathways has had on care-experienced young people in Glasgow. Within the scope of this evaluation it was only possible to interview a small number of young people, mentors and teachers who have participated in MCR Pathways. This means that comparison between subgroups within

each category was not possible, for example, comparing the views of those who had been part of the programme for different lengths of time. Furthermore, qualitative data collection for this project took place between April and December 2018 and therefore, qualitative responses are limited to this time period. As a result, the qualitative data does not reflect any changes implemented by MCR beyond this period to address any challenges identified by feedback mechanisms. To mitigate against this limitation, the changes implemented by MCR to address challenges are reflected on in the conclusion.

The real strength of this evaluation comes from drawing together the data captured from the different elements of the evaluation. This approach provides a more extensive set of findings by using different methods to collect data to promote a more comprehensive understanding of the impact that the MCR Pathways programme has on educational attainment. This approach also helps mitigate against the limitations of a single quantitative or qualitative methodological approach which are outlined above.

2 Measuring outcomes of MCR Pathways participants

2.1 Measuring pupil outcomes from 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18

2.1.1 Measurement against Social Bridging Finance targets

In this section we discuss the extent to which the specific Social Bridging Finance targets for engagement, attainment and destinations have been reached. Due to the small sample sizes in individual years included in the evaluation, a pooled sample of 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 is used here. This pooled sample is also used to calculate the level of impact that MCR Pathways has had on care-experienced young people's educational outcomes which is presented in Chapter 3. Data for the outcomes in individual years can be found in Appendix B.

Table 2.1 below shows that all of the Social Bridging Finance targets have been exceeded for those mentored on the MCR Pathways programme. The proportion of mentored pupils who stay on at school after school leaving age is 71% compared with the Social Bridging Finance target of 60%, and 82% of those on the programme leave school to positive destinations[3] exceeding the target of 61%. In terms of exam qualifications, 9 in 10 (88%) mentored pupils achieved at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification compared with the Social Bridging Finance target of 75% and 88% achieved at least 5 SCQF Level 4 qualifications compared with the target of 84%. Three-quarters (73%) achieved an SCQF Level 4 qualification in English and Maths, exceeding the 64% Social Bridging Finance target and 56% of pupils on the MCR Pathways programme achieved at least 3 SCQF Level 5 qualifications compared with the target of 51%.

In 2015-2016, there were 154 care-experienced young people in the 14 schools, excluding the pilot school, who were part of the MCR Pathways programme in this year. In the 2016-2017 school year, there were 251 care-experienced young people taking part in the MCR Pathways programme and 362 in 2017-18. As discussed in Section 1.4.1 above, those identified by schools as disadvantaged young people and who were part of the MCR Pathways programme are not included in this report.

[3] This uses MCR's definition of a positive destination as further education, higher education or employment. This definition is stricter than the Scottish Government's, which also includes training, voluntary work and activity agreements. This means the outcome for this evaluation is harder to achieve relative to published statistics of 'positive destinations'

Table 2.1 Individual level outcomes of mentored pupils in Glasgow compared with Social Bridging Finance targets (2015-18)		
Care experienced mentored		
Number of pupils	**Proportion (%):**	**Social Bridging Finance target (%)**
Stayed on in school after school leaving age		
159/225	70.7	60
An SCQF Level 4 in English and Maths		
114/156	73.1	64
At least five Level 4 SCQF Qualifications		
137/156	87.8	84
At least one Level 5 SCQF Qualification		
137/156	87.8	75
At least three Level 5 SCQF Qualifications		
87/156	55.8	51
Positive Destination		
133/163	81.6	61

2.1.2 Differences in outcomes for mentored and non-mentored care-experienced pupils

In addition to reviewing progress against the Social Bridging Finance targets, we have also compared the outcomes of those who have been mentored on the MCR Pathways programme and those care-experienced pupils who attend one of the 28 schools included in this analysis, but who have not yet joined the programme. Again, the pooled sample is used from three years of the programme to enable us to measure any statistically significant differences between these two groups. The full tables for this descriptive analysis can be found in Appendix B.

This analysis (Table 2.2) shows that those care-experienced pupils who are part of the MCR Pathways programme are doing significantly better in terms of the outcomes that make up the Social Bridging Finance targets compared with those who are not part of the programme from the 28 Glasgow schools. For example, whereas 70.7% of mentored care-experienced pupils are staying on in school after school leaving age only 58.8% of non-mentored care-experienced pupils are staying on at school. And around 8 in 10 (81.6%) mentored care-experienced pupils are moving on after school to a positive destination compared with just over 6 in 10 (62.0%) of those who are not being mentored.

The attainment targets also show significant differences between mentored and non-mentored pupils. Seven in ten (73.1%) mentored care-experienced pupils gained SCQF Level 4 qualifications in Maths and English, compared with just over half (52.3%) of non-mentored care-experienced pupils. Approximately nine in ten (87.8%) achieved at least 5 SCQF Level 4 qualifications, a significantly higher proportion than the six in ten (61.7%) non-mentored care-experienced pupils. Around 9 in 10 (87.8%)

mentored pupils achieved at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification compared with 6 in 10 (61.0%) among non-mentored pupils. Finally, three-fifths (55.8%) of mentored care-experienced pupils achieved at least three SCQF Level 5 qualifications, compared with two-fifths (39.7%) of non-mentored care-experienced pupils.

Table 2.2 Comparison of individual level outcomes of mentored and non-mentored care-experienced young people (2015-2018)

	Number of young people		Proportion (%):	
	Mentored care-experienced	**Non-mentored care-experienced**	**Mentored care-experienced**	**Non-mentored care-experienced**
Stayed on in school after school leaving age* **				
Yes	159/225	224/381	70.7	58.8
No	66/225	157/224	29.3	41.2
An SCQF Level 4 in English and Maths* **				
Yes	114/156	150/287	73.1	52.3
No	42/156	137/287	26.9	47.7
At least five Level 4 SCQF Qualifications* **				
Yes	137/156	177/287	87.8	61.7
No	110/287	19/156	12.2	38.3
At least one Level 5 SCQF Qualification* **				
Yes	137/156	175/287	87.8	61.0
No	19/156	112/287	12.2	39.0
At least three Level 5 SCQF Qualifications* **				
Yes	87/156	114/287	55.8	39.7
No	69/156	173/287	44.2	60.3
Positive Destination* **				
Yes	133/163	212/342	81.6	62.0
No	30/163	130/342	18.4	38.0

Asterisks indicate the 'p-value' or level of statistical significance. ** indicates a p-value of less than 0.05 and *** indicates a p-value of less than 0.01.

These figures show that there were significant differences in the outcomes between those on the MCR Pathways programme and those eligible pupils who are not part of the programme. What these figures are not able to show is whether this difference is as a direct result of being part of the MCR Pathways programme. To be able to say that this difference was a direct result of being part of the MCR Pathways Programme, we need to be able to evidence that this impact was not the result of differences in characteristics between those pupils who decided to take part in MCR Pathways and those who have not taken part. To do so, further research was undertaken to evaluate the impact against a control group using a Propensity Score Matching approach. This is discussed in full in Chapter 3.

3 Measuring the impact of MCR Pathways on care-experienced young people's outcomes

3.1 Outcome measures

In this section, the analysis aims to measure the impact of MCR Pathways on three specific outcomes. The approach estimates the impact of MCR Pathways on individuals who participated in the programme, relative to those who did not take part in MCR Pathways. This analysis attempts to quantify the existence and extent of any causal impacts directly linked with being part of MCR Pathways.

This section outlines the approach and results used to quantitatively measure the impact of MCR Pathways on three distinct pupil outcomes: retention, attainment and their initial destinations after leaving school. Specifically these outcomes are defined as follows:

Improved retention rates beyond age 16: MCR Pathways have a strict definition of retention. If a pupil is not an eligible age leaver at the start of the S5 academic year, they are required to stay on until December. Therefore, being enrolled in S5 does not necessarily reflect a conscious decision to continue to engage with education. In this analysis, retention is defined using those young people on the roll at February of S5 once those who required to stay until December had left, that is, those who continue to be enrolled in education after they are old enough to leave should they want to.

Improved achievement of academic qualifications: The MCR Pathways programme monitors their pupils' achievements against several attainment measures. To avoid multiple hypothesis testing, this analysis considers a single attainment outcome; at least one Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 equivalent qualification. In recent years this would most commonly be an SQA National 5 award.[4]

Improved likelihood of a positive post-16 destination: This uses MCR's definition of a positive destination as further education, higher education or employment. This definition is stricter than the Scottish Government's, which also includes training, voluntary work and activity agreements. This means the outcome for this evaluation is harder to achieve, relative to published statistics of 'positive destinations'.

MCR Pathways was introduced to schools in Glasgow using a 'greatest need phase in' design, meaning that schools identified as facing the most challenges were included in the first roll out of the MCR Programme. This is reflected in the descriptive analysis, which indicates that Free School Meal (FSM) receipt is more prevalent for mentored pupils and they were also more likely to live in more deprived areas (bottom decile of SIMD) relative to non-mentored pupils. This means that schools were enrolled in the programme gradually, with only some schools initially allocated to receive the programme before it was rolled out to the remaining schools over subsequent

[4] National 5 courses replaced National Courses at Standard Grade Credit and at Intermediate 2 level.

academic years. The benefit of such a design is that it naturally creates two groups of young people – one receiving the programme and the other not - within similar geographic and educational contexts. This helps us create 'quantitative impact estimates' to work out whether there is evidence that the intervention has been beneficial to those who have participated in the programme.

There are 30 schools in Glasgow who could participate in MCR Pathways. This analysis uses all schools, except the pilot school as MCR Pathways has been operating in this school for a longer period. The analysis aims to measure the level of impact that participating in MCR Pathways has had for young people. In the analysis we produce 'quantitative impact estimates' which are created by comparing the outcomes of those pupils who are part of the programme in a given year ('intervention' group) with those who have not yet participated in the programme ('control' group).

The control group was selected from the group of 'potential comparators' from schools in Glasgow. The 'potential comparators' group is made up of young people in care, or those previously in care, who were not yet participating[5] in MCR Pathways from all 29 schools included in the analysis.

The control group is used to robustly demonstrate the impact of MCR Pathways. These pupils are selected based on sharing characteristics with pupils in the 'intervention' group. This is achieved by using Propensity Score Matching (PSM). Therefore, not all 'potential comparators' were selected, instead the control group is a subset of all the 'potential comparator' pupils. Further details of the PSM approach are provided in section 3.2 below.

3.2 The Propensity Score Matching method

Propensity Score Matching (PSM) is a statistical technique that attempts to establish what the outcomes of MCR Pathways participants would have been had they not taken part in the programme. This is done by matching those who are part of MCR Pathways with individuals who are similar to them but who were not part of the programme and then comparing their outcomes. The PSM approach was selected as the most appropriate tool to estimate causal impacts of MCR Pathways because the available data makes it possible to identify a suitable matched control group. The 'greatest need phase in' design also makes other methods, such as 'Difference in Differences' difficult to robustly implement. Propensity Score Matching (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983) can be used to identify people who have not participated in the intervention but have similar characteristics to those that did, thus achieving an estimate of the 'causal impact' of MCR Pathways.

In other words, we assume the outcomes achieved by the control group are equivalent to the outcomes that would have been achieved by those who took part in the programme if they had not, in fact, taken part in MCR Pathways. In this way we can

[5]When MCR Pathways was operating in a subset of Glasgow schools (2015-16, 2016-17) the 'potential comparator' group is drawn from schools not implementing the programme. In 2017-18, the comparator sample is drawn from individuals who have not yet taken part but are in the pipeline to take part in the future. Those that have declined the support are not included, as they may differ on unobserved characteristics (such as motivation).

establish what is referred to as a 'causal impact', that is, that any differences between the group who are taking part in MCR Pathways and the 'control' group can be said to be caused by their participation in the programme. This is because the only difference that is observed between the two groups – in relation to the outcomes being measured - is that one has taken part in the programme. Further details on how the PSM works and consideration of the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches are provided in Appendix A.

There are several underlying assumptions necessary for PSM to work effectively. It requires information that predicts who participates in a programme as well as factors that contribute to achievement of the outcome in question. This often presents a significant challenge, not least because decisions about who does and who does not take part in a programme are often based, understandably, not only on objective selection criteria that can be measured (for example, being in care or previously been in care) but also subjective decisions made by potential participants and those running the programme, which are more difficult to consistently capture in quantitative analysis. There are also a number of statistical considerations. Amongst these are having sufficient sample sizes to robustly detect differences between the groups. For this reason, the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 data has been combined to mitigate the low sample size issue.

In addition, it is important to establish 'common support'. Common support is the presence of at least one individual in the control group that is suitably like individuals in the intervention group. It calculates whether persons with a specific set of characteristics have a positive probability of being both participants and non-participants, to ensure that fundamental differences in characteristics between those who are part of the programme and those who are not do not exist. Covariate balancing, which is whether PSM has successfully reduced bias on observed characteristics, must also be assessed. For full details on how the matching was conducted and the propensity score distributions, which are used to assess common support, and the covariate balancing tests, see Appendix A.

3.3 Pupil and school level characteristics

The first part of the analysis provides a description of young people in care (or those who had previously been in care) in Glasgow schools. This analysis allows us to understand what differences there are between the characteristics of the mentored and potential comparators and additionally, if the schools in which they are studying have similar populations. These differences are then controlled for in the next stage of analysis (Propensity Score Matching) so that we are able to compare each pupil with another pupil with similar characteristics.

The sample of pupils is taken from three consecutive years of MCR Pathways, from the start of rollout in 2015-16 until the end of the 2017-18 academic year. Three years of pupil data are used to maximise the possible statistical power and reduce the uncertainty around impact estimates. Statistical uncertainty in this context refers to how reliable our impact estimate is. Confidence intervals (which indicates the range of expected estimates for 95 out of 100 samples of a population) are wider the greater this uncertainty is. When confidence intervals are wide, there is a risk that the 'true'

impact for a population is substantially different to the estimate of the impact. This section explores the characteristics of MCR Pathways participants and the remaining young people in care, or previously in care, in Glasgow. Note that whilst MCR Pathways also supports pupils who are otherwise disadvantaged, as the decision for inclusion for these pupils is subjective, they are not considered in any of the quantitative analysis.

The analysis shows that there are some notable differences in the characteristics of mentored and non-mentored pupils, reflecting the 'greatest need phase in' design (see Tables B.1, B.3 and B.5 in Appendix B for full details).

Table 3.1 below shows that in the 2015-18 sample, approximately half were male and half female among those being mentored and also in the 'potential comparator' group. The proportion of pupils known to belong to an ethnic minority was lower among those being mentored compared with those in the 'potential comparator' group (8.0% and 13.5% respectively). The proportion of mentored and 'potential comparators' was similar in terms of the proportion known to have English as an Additional Language (9.4% and 9.2% respectively) and the proportion known to have Additional Support Needs (66.5% and 62.8% respectively).

The proportion of pupils known to be in receipt of free school meals was higher among those on the MCR Pathways programme compared with the 'potential comparators'. In the 2015-18 sample just under 4 in 10 (38.3%) mentored pupils were known to be receiving free school meals, compared with 3 in 10 of those in the 'potential comparator' group. The other notable difference between the mentored group and the 'potential comparators' was the level of deprivation associated with the areas in which they lived. The proportion of pupils living in the most deprived areas (the bottom decile of SIMD) was greater for those on the MCR Pathways programme in the combined 2015-18 sample, with around 6 in 10 (60.1%) of the mentored group living in the most deprived areas compared with around 5 in 10 (51%) of those in the 'potential comparator' group. This illustrates that the MCR Pathways targeted pupils were among the most deprived groups.

Table 3.1 Individual level characteristics of the 2015-18 sample				
	n / N		***Proportion (%):***	
	Mentored	***Potential Comparators***	***Mentored***	***Potential Comparators***
Gender				
Male	335/767	558/1,188	46.7	47.0
Female	432/767	630/1,188	53.3	53.0
Ethnicity* **				
White	695/754	836/966	92.0	86.5
Non-White	59/754	130/966	8.0	13.5
	n / N		***Proportion (%):***	
	Mentored	***Potential Comparators***	***Mentored***	***Potential Comparators***
English as an Additional Language (EAL)**				
Known to be EAL	56/767	133/1,188	9.4	9.2
Not known to be EAL	711/767	1,005/1,188	90.6	90.8
Receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)* **				
Known to receive FSM	294/767	355/1,188	38.3	29.9
Not known to receive FSM	473/767	833/1,188	61.7	70.1
Additional Support Needs (ASN)				
Known to have ASN	510/767	746/1,188	66.5	62.8
Not known to have ASN	257/767	442/1,188	33.5	37.2
Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD Decile of the pupil's home address)				
1***	460/767	599/1,175	60.1	51.0
2	134/767	206/1,175	17.5	17.5
3	46/767	107/1,175	5.8	9.1
4	46/767	80/1,175	6.1	6.8
Between 5 and 10**	81/767	183/1,175	10.5	15.6

Asterisks indicate the 'p-value' or level of statistical significance.
** indicates a p-value of less than 0.05 and *** indicates a p-value of less than 0.01.

One of the key features of the implementation of the MCR Pathways was its 'greatest need phase in' design. There were some subtle differences in school-level characteristics (see Appendix B, Tables B.2 and B.4). For example, school level proportions of care-experienced pupils were slightly higher for those in the mentored group compared with the 'control' group in 2016-17 (though proportions in general were very low). Similarly, there were also slightly higher levels of attainment in schools in the 'potential comparator' group in 2015-16. This section has shown that there are significant differences between the characteristics of care-experienced pupils who are part of MCR Pathways and those who are not yet part of the programme due to its phased in design. Comparisons of outcomes should therefore take these differences in

characteristics into account, to remove the bias and make a direct comparison possible.

3.4 Impact of MCR Pathways on pupil outcomes

The Propensity Score Matching process produces two groups which can be compared: first, those who are part of the MCR Pathways programme and where we know whether or not they have achieved one of the three outcomes being measured. The comparison, or 'control' group contains those care-experienced pupils who are not part of the programme but match the characteristics of those who are part of the programme in all other ways that have been included in the analysis. The analysis then compares the likelihood of achieving a positive outcome for those who are part of MCR Pathways with those who are in the 'control' group.

The propensity score distributions indicate that common support has been established for all three outcomes. In addition, the covariate balancing tests illustrate that there were no statistically significant biases in observed characteristics between the intervention and control group after matching.

3.4.1 Retention

The first outcome for consideration is retention which measures the likelihood of a pupil staying on at school after school leaving age. Table 3.2 below shows the impact estimate for staying on at school is 10.5 percentage points. This suggests that the likelihood of a young person staying on in school to S5, after their school leaving age, was 10.5 percentage points higher if they were part of MCR Pathways compared with those who were not part of the programme.

We can be confident that the MCR Pathways programme did have a positive impact on participants' achievement of this outcome, as these findings were statistically significant. However, there is statistical uncertainty around this estimate, due to the small sample sizes, and the level of this statistical uncertainty is shown in the confidence intervals in the table below.[6] In this case, 95 times out of 100, the impact estimate would be between 19.2 percentage points and 1.9 percentage points.

On average, **70.6% of mentored pupils continued their education in S5, 10.5 percentage points higher** relative to other young people in care, or previously in care, in Glasgow.

[6] The confidence intervals indicate the level of statistical uncertainty around an estimate. If we were to draw a random sample from the population, 95 times out of 100 the impact estimate would fall between the ranges outlined in the confidence intervals.

Table 3.2	Impact of MCR Pathways on proportion of pupils staying on at school after school leaving age
Impact estimate (percentage points)	**10.5**
Standard Error	0.04
95% Confidence Intervals	
Upper Bound	19.2
Lower Bound	1.9
Intervention group sample size	*225*
Control group sample size	*295*

3.4.2 Attainment

The outcome for attainment that was considered in the PSM analysis was the proportion of pupils achieving at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification (see Table 3.3 below). This showed that there was a positive impact for those care-experienced pupils who are part of the MCR Pathways programme. The impact estimate of 21.0 suggests that the likelihood of achieving at least one Level 5 qualification may be 21.0 percentage points higher among those taking part in MCR Pathways compared with those who are not.

We can be confident that the MCR Pathways programme did have a positive impact on participants' achievement of this outcome. The analysis showed that **87.8% of mentored pupils achieved at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification, 21.0 percentage points higher than their peers**. The confidence intervals indicate that (in 95 out of 100 random samples from the population) the impact estimate would be between 30.4 percentage points and 11.7 percentage points.

Table 3.3	Impact of MCR Pathways on proportion of pupils achieving at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification
Impact estimate (percentage points)	**21.0**
Standard Error	0.05
95% Confidence Intervals	
Upper Bound	30.4
Lower Bound	11.7
Intervention group sample size	*156*
Control group sample size	*188*

3.4.3 Destinations

The final outcome considered was the proportion of pupils who go on to a positive destination after leaving school. This was defined as moving on to further education, higher education or employment. The impact estimate shown in Table 3.4 below indicates that the likelihood of moving on to a positive destination after leaving school was 25.3 percentage points higher for care-experienced pupils on the MCR Pathways programme compared with those not on the programme.

We can be confident that the MCR Pathways programme did have a positive impact on participants' moving on to a positive destination after leaving school. The analysis showed that on leaving school, **81.6% of mentored pupils went on to a positive destination, 25.3 percentage points higher than their peers**.

However, as with the other impact estimates, there is some degree of statistical uncertainty around this figure due, in part, to the small sample sizes. The covariate balancing tests indicated that even after matching. The confidence intervals indicate that (in 95 out of 100 random samples from the population) the impact estimate would be between 35.3 percentage points and 15.3 percentage points.

Table 3.4 Impact of MCR Pathways on reaching a positive destination post-school

Impact estimate (percentage points)	**25.3**
Standard Error	0.05
95% Confidence Intervals	
Upper Bound	35.3
Lower Bound	15.3
Intervention group sample size	*163*
Control group sample size	*194*

All three estimates are subject to relatively wide confidence levels, which is partially due to the relatively low sample sizes available for the analysis. Despite this, MCR Pathways was shown to have a statistically significant, positive impact on all three outcomes.

4 Summary of measuring impact findings

To account for differences in characteristics between mentored and non-mentored pupils, Propensity Score Matching (PSM) analysis was conducted. Overall, the impact estimates produced in the PSM analysis show that MCR Pathways does have a positive impact on its participants, with statistically significant positive impacts being recorded for all three outcomes examined: staying on at school, attainment and moving forward to a positive destination after school.

The main caveat for these results is the low sample sizes and the subsequent low power of the study, meaning the impact estimates had relatively large confidence intervals.

The comparison of the proportion of care-experienced pupils who are part of MCR Pathways with positive outcomes compared with those who are not part of the programme showed statistically significant differences between the outcomes of these two groups. These findings clearly indicate that MCR Pathways participants were more likely to stay on at school, achieve at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification and move on to a positive destination after leaving school.

EXPLORING THE VIEWS OF MCR PATHWAYS PARTICIPANTS, MENTORS AND TEACHERS

5 Profile of qualitative interview participants

Thirty interviews were completed with people who have participated in the MCR Pathways mentoring programme. These were:

- 15 pupils currently on the programme
- 5 former pupils
- 6 mentors
- 4 MCR link teachers

5.1 Young people

Fifteen current pupils and 5 past pupils (also known as 'Next Steps' participants) from 5 different schools were interviewed about their experience of having a mentor. Those interviewed were an almost equal mix of males (n=11) and females (n=9). Table 5.1 below shows that at the time of interviewing the majority of current pupils were in 5th year (n=11) with the remainder being in 6th year (n=4). The past pupils had left school within the last 2 years (in either 2017 or 2018).

Table 5.1: Gender of current and past pupils and year at school of current pupils

Gender (n=20)		Year at school (n=15)	
Male	Female	5th year	6th year
11	9	11	4

During the interview young people were asked how long they had been seeing a mentor. Of those interviewed, the length of time they had been seeing a mentor ranged from less than a year up to 5 years, however the majority had been seeing a mentor for 1-2 years (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Length of time with a mentor for current and past pupils

Length of time with a mentor (n=20)				
Less than a year	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years
2	10	4	2	2

Only pupils who had seen their mentor for at least 12 sessions were eligible to take part, as it was felt that this was enough time to have experienced an impact from the mentoring sessions. The number of sessions those interviewed had with a mentor ranged from 13 to over 61 sessions, however, the majority had between 25 and 48 sessions at the time they were selected for interview (Table 5.3). Three of the five former pupils said they were still in contact with their mentors.

Table 5.3: Number of sessions with a mentor for current and past pupils

Number of sessions with mentor (n=20)				
13-24	25-36	37-48	49-60	61+
2	5	6	3	4

5.2 Mentors

The mentors interviewed came from 5 schools currently participating in the MCR Pathways mentoring programme. Three mentors were female and 3 were male. The length of time they had been a mentor in the programme differed with three having been mentors for approximately a year and three having been mentors for 3-4 years. Four of the mentors had mentored one young person while the other two mentors had mentored 2 or 3 young people.

5.3 Teachers

Four teachers from 4 different schools were interviewed. Two of the teachers interviewed had been involved in the programme for under a year while the other two had been involved for 2-3 years. They were all designated links between MCR Pathways and the school.

> "So I was the school Coordinator, or the school '*link*' actually is probably the term you'd use for it. So I would be very much there to be the person to help the actual MCR Pathways Coordinator in terms of, you know, getting used to the school, getting used to the *system* in the school, supporting that person when it came to giving information or organising the group activities, or setting up systems within the school for mentoring visits... 'cause every school is different. It was very much about the support for that." (Teacher)

6 Expectations and level of involvement with MCR Pathways

6.1 Pupils' understanding and expectations of MCR Pathways

A common way that young people first heard about MCR Pathways mentoring was from either their Pastoral Care teacher or school MCR Coordinator. Others had heard about the programme from someone they knew who was already taking part, such as an older sibling or friend. Some young people had been told that the mentoring programme was an opportunity for them to talk to someone who could also offer them some support.

> "I was approached by my [MCR] Coordinator in school. I'd never ever heard of it before…Just really told me that it was an opportunity for somebody to be there, talk to. I guess she knew there was background things and that going on." (Young person)

One young person had misunderstood how this support would be offered, thinking it may be quite formal. They were pleased when they realised it was a more informal form of support.

> "I thought it would be like a therapy. We would just have to say how we were feeling, or how you feel about school and things like that, and just take note of how you feel. I thought that's what it was gonna be like – I'll sit like an interview and be asked how I feel that week – but it wasn't like that. First time we came, we introduced each other, we played games, we got to know each other, favourite colour, what we liked, and little things like that, and it surprised me because it wasn't as I thought it would be like." (Young person)

For some young people they did not really know what the mentoring would involve at the beginning.

> "It was my Pastoral Care teacher who told me about it and told me that he picked me, and I was like, "OK. That's good", but I didn't really know much about it at the beginning." (Young person)

However, among this group, there was a view that it did not matter that they did not know exactly what the mentoring programme would involve, they were excited about being picked to take part.

> "The Pathways Coordinator contacted me. I had no idea who she was, and I went upstairs to her office, and she was explaining what MCR was, and how they could help people like me. She didn't really specify who was getting this help. She said it was for bright individuals, and I was like, "Oh, I'm special!". So she was like, "You should give it a try, and, if you don't like it, you can opt out of it any time.", and I was like, "Well, it doesn't sound too bad.", and she was really

> nice, so I was like, “Yeah. I'll just go for it”. And then I learned more about it when I was in it. I was like, “Ah! OK. I see why you guys picked me, but I'm really happy you picked me!”” (Young person)

However, for others, not knowing what mentoring would involve made them feel nervous.

> “At the time, I wasn’t too sure…I'm no’ the best wi' people, so at first, I was kinda concerned about what I would dae, and what I would say, and who'd, who would it be.” (Young person)

For some, they felt nervous because they thought they were getting a mentor because they were not doing well enough.

> “At first I was like why am I being singled out? Like why do I need this extra person? And then ken I went to see what I would get out of it and ended up liking it, so I just kept with it.” (Young person)

Once they knew what the mentoring programme was, young people relaxed.

> “At first, I was kinda worried when she was saying the MCR Pathways programme was to try and help like disadvantaged young people, ‘cause I was like, “Oh, I'm being put in a bracket of people, and I'm gonna be treated a certain way”, but to find out how everything was extremely confidential and like how it wasn’t trying to define me for what I’d been through, but my talents and traits, I was much more excited to be part of it, and I've enjoyed every minute!” (Young person)

There were a number of things young people thought they would get out of having a mentor which included: help with school work, someone to talk to, experience talking with adults and help with plans for the future.

> “When it came to the process of getting a mentor, I did really enjoy it…it was really cool ‘cause everything was tailored towards my aspirations, the things that I was interested in.” (Young person)

6.2 MCR activities

All young people interviewed had participated in the mentoring element of MCR Pathways. In addition, the majority had also taken part in a number of other activities organised by MCR Pathways.

The most common activity mentioned by young people, teachers and mentors was Talent Tasters. Talent Tasters are available to young people from S3 and S4, are tailored to the interest of the young people and give them the opportunity to try out a wide range of different activities: subjects at college or university; opportunities in the community; or different types of jobs.

> “I've been on Talent Tasters, so I've been to City Building, and was there for a day and did like construction ‘cause I was interested in that. And I went to SWECO, the engineering company, and went there for half a day, and we had a

lecture. They were telling us what SWECO did, what type o' engineering they offered as well." (Young person)

The young people interviewed had taken part in a wide range of vocational Talent Tasters including: hospitality, catering, accounting, beauty, health, performing arts, childcare, mechanic, paramedic, scientist and electrician. A number of the young people had also visited colleges or universities to try out specific subjects they were considering studying after school.

> "I did a summer school programme at Strathclyde University 2 years in a row…A lot of it was to do with introducing you to the different subjects you would do at university…And then a lot of it was like presentation stuff as well, which was helped along by the mentor programme I feel, especially since, especially *then*, I was a particularly shy wee boy!" (Young person)

In addition to Talent Tasters for work or further education, other activities provided as part of the MCR Pathways programme that the young people being interviewed had been involved in included: group work (in 1st and 2nd year), the Duke of Edinburgh Award (from 3rd year onwards) and workshops with the Prince's Trust.

A number of current and past pupils had become MCR Ambassadors to help promote the work being done by MCR Pathways and the impact being involved has had on them personally. MCR Ambassadors are involved in a range of activities such as event organisation and public speaking at events.

6.3 Continuing involvement with MCR Pathways post-school

Two of the past pupils have maintained contact with their mentor and MCR Pathways since leaving school, while the others have kept in touch with either their mentor or MCR Pathways.

For those that are still in touch with their mentors they meet less regularly than they did at school, perhaps once a fortnight, once a month or every few months. This less frequent contact is partly due to busier schedules and the contact often has a different focus than it did when they were still at school.

> "Now especially it's a lot more focused on social and wellbeing as opposed to academic attainment." (Young person)

The past pupils said they valued being able to continue their relationship with their mentor as it gives them someone to speak to that is not their family or from an educational institution.

> "It's good to have that social experience that's outside the family as well. It's the same thing really than what it was in school. It's the exact same thing: someone that isn't in university, someone that isn't in the institution, someone that isn't family to speak to." (Young person)

The past pupils who had continued contact with MCR Pathways after leaving school, have done so on a voluntary basis to help promote the programme by sharing their own experiences.

> “If anything, it's [relationship with MCR] grown closer since I left school because I'm a lot more involved with the extra-curricular stuff – like this for instance! – so I interact with the wider MCR Pathways staff a lot more now than I used to. So like originally it would have just been my mentor and the Pathways Coordinator in the school I interacted with, and the relationship was very good with both of those…but my relationship with the wider MCR Pathways sort of staff has become a lot better as well after leaving school I feel, so it's close and supportive...” (Young person)

7 Attendance

Many of the young people interviewed had good school attendance prior to getting their mentors. Young people who had poor attendance previously felt that having a mentor had improved their attendance. In some cases, attendance of young people had improved to the extent that even school staff reported noticeable improvements.

> "I can think of one young man who had quite a troubled time. Attendance and timekeeping was horrific. And since he had his mentor, there's a huge change in him coming in to school, being on time, the manner." (Teacher)

7.1 Factors that contribute to improved attendance

7.1.1 Weekly meetings with mentors

Attending weekly meetings with their mentor was a key factor that motivated many of the young people to attend school more regularly. Young people were keen not to miss these meetings.

> "I was late all the time, but I was in school! Especially 'cause my mentor and I, her job wouldn't allow her to have a specific time to see me every week, 'cause she had a business to run, so she would come every week for whenever she could, and then it would always suit my timetable, but I wouldn't know exactly what day she would come, so I tried to make it every week so I wouldn't miss her." (Young person)

While ensuring that they were present for their meetings with their mentor motivated young people to attend school more regularly, over time, it appeared to have brought about more substantial attitudinal changes regarding school. One young person reflected on how they were initially motivated to attend school to meet their mentor, but over time, their views about school also changed.

> "I deliberately put [meetings with mentor] to the end of the week so I would need to come in constantly… then over time it just changed my viewpoint on school and just my schedule really – just actually waking up and wanting to go to school, rather than just making it a chore." (Young person)

7.1.2 Addressing the underlying reasons for non-attendance

Some young people also noted that their mentors provided continuous support and encouragement to address specific issues that led to their non-attendance at school. For example, in some cases where young people had poor attendance due to difficult experiences such as bullying or difficulties in their family life, mentors provided young people with the confidence to address the issues that were contributing to their regular absence.

> "It was a slow kinda like change because of course it wasn't like I got [mentor] and then everything was better! It was like, because I was becoming more confident to vocalise my issues, I was becoming more confident to vocalise them to my family an' that, which, before, if I had an issue or if I was feeling down, I'd retract myself from the situation and I wouldn't speak out to anyone, but I was able to go, "OK. I need help", and open up to them, which improved my family life, which then improved my academics, and I think that improved my attendance slowly…" (Young person)

7.1.3 Developing positive behaviours

Mentors were also able to improve young people's attendance by helping them develop positive behaviours such as being disciplined, responsible and reliable. One mentor described an instance where he had to help the mentee realise the importance of self-discipline and the impact that the mentees behaviour has on others.

> "I remember having a session with him once when he hadn't turned up for the previous week's session 'cause he had just decided not to come in to school that day. You know, my diary was revolving round getting there for that time etc and stuff, and I was at the school to discover he wasn't there. And I had quite a frank discussion with him about, you know, how did he think I felt with the fact that I had given up a lot of my time in travelling time and all the rest to be there, and he was a 'no show' for no good reason, other than he couldn't be bothered? So I think he started to recognise that. He started to realise that he had to apply a bit more self-discipline and be a bit more self-aware, you know?" (Mentor)

Interviews with past pupils indicated that the positive influence that mentors had on improving attendance had also benefited them in their life beyond school. One past pupil, who had struggled with attendance in school, noted that not having the same problem in college makes them proud of themselves.

> "…now that I'm in college I've not had one issue with my attendance, and I feel really proud of that, that I'm on track and I've kinda done a complete 180 from where I was in like 4th year, or even before that!" (Young person)

8 Attainment

8.1 Evidence of improved academic performance

Young people on the programme felt that having a mentor had improved their academic performance as evidenced by a change in their grades. For some, there was a marked difference between their grades before and after having a mentor.

> "I didn't really expect it, like my prelim for English I failed it and I ended up with a 'B' for my Higher English at the end of the exams so…that made me happy." (Young person)

Young people also reported receiving positive feedback from their teachers indicating that they were doing well in class.

> "Like at the start o' the year, I was kind of slipping and dropping in class, and, near the end, I was getting a lot better. The teachers definitely seen an improvement in my work. They were giving me really positive feedback." (Young person)

It was evident that for both current and past mentees, seeing the change in their academic performance or receiving positive feedback on their performance improved their overall confidence in their abilities. When asked how they felt about their improved academic performance, young people said they were "really happy" or felt "very good" about their achievement.

Even among those who had not experienced a noticeable change in their grades or received positive teacher feedback, there was a feeling that, since having a mentor, they were better able to grasp and understand subjects they found difficult before.

> "I could ask for help or I could study this online or things like that, and, because of it [mentoring], I've actually improved on my Maths – not that I'm passing all of the tests, because I've rarely got any tests, but I understand it more than I did before…" (Young person)

8.2 How mentors helped with attainment

8.2.1 Study skills

One of the key ways in which mentors helped young people with their academic performance was by developing their study skills. Depending on their individual needs, young people reported receiving support from their mentor in various areas related to studying such as making a study plan, memorising, finding helpful online resources, concentration techniques, making study notes, doing practice questions and going through past papers.

> "She gave me study ideas, she gave me a timetable when to study, when to have a break, and when to study again and like…available places such as information to go to a library, maybe sit in the park with a pen and paper and jot some notes doon. Something like that or listening to music while I'm doing my work which helped me concentrate." (Young person)

Mentors also highlighted how they had helped mentees to improve their academic performance. For example, one mentor noted that he did not feel confident enough to provide subject specific help, but instead, focussed on providing the pupil with study tips and exam techniques.

> "One of the things we have looked at is exam technique…and I think that has probably helped. I haven't directly helped in any particular subject, I mean its decades since I was at school and…I wouldn't feel confident enough for example to help him with biology, or something like that. But how to tackle the exam we've done a bit of that." (Mentor)

8.2.2 Confidence to ask for help

Although mentors will not necessarily have the subject specific knowledge to help young people, they have been able to provide the young people with the confidence to ask for help when needed. Young people in the MCR Pathways programme described how mentors had given them the confidence to ask their teachers for assistance; an area they had struggled with in the past.

> "I don't really like ask people for help either, but I managed to just like...I don't know, but it just got more like...she felt more welcoming, so I've managed to ask her for help. And then she told me like, even though she can't help me to the fullest, my teachers can and everything. I just have to make sure to see the good sides of asking my teacher for help. 'Cause I always thought if I asked my teachers for help, "Oh I'm just like silly. I'm just like made you feel dumb or something", but she's managed to make sure that I'm not like felt really like that and boost my confidence." (Young person)

Pupils who were still not confident enough to ask their teachers for help felt that having a mentor meant they still had someone they could go to, when they needed help with their work. For example, one young person who struggled with asking questions in the classroom, due to fears of being judged, felt that because their mentor was not someone who was from the school, they felt more comfortable asking them for help:

> "It was good because it was like I wasn't being judged because I wasn't able to do things, so like when I'd be in a classroom I'd be worried to ask about things because: (1) peers judging me, you know, like "Oh, you can't do this. This is easy", but for me I was like, "This is so hard! Why can't I grasp it?", but it was easy because this person isn't a teacher, so...well, they're not teaching at our school!, so them coming in, I didn't have judgement to be like, "I don't understand this" and then them maybe sitting through with me and explaining it in a way that I might find easier to understand, so that really benefitted me…" (Young person)

8.2.3 Managing exam-related stress

Some mentors also helped their mentees manage their exam related stress. One mentor described how he had helped his mentee manage his nerves during exams.

> "I think initially he was disappointed with his exam results in the Nat 5's, his Nat 5 prelims but I think that was mainly because he got very, very nervous and over the last couple of years I think he's become more confident in his own abilities and I think that's helped him just to relax a bit more and be better prepared. I think he was getting so nervous he made himself ill before he sat the exams but now he's…I think again it's maybe more about getting a little bit more maturity, but he seems to be more confident in his own abilities and taking things in his stride." (Mentor)

Mentors also helped pupils manage their stress by emphasising the importance of slotting in regular breaks and doing things they enjoyed in between study sessions to avoid burn out.

> "I've told him when studying to take breaks, I'm a retired university professor, and I could see some students just working themselves into a frazzle, with dire results. So…I've talked to him quite a bit about how to study and how to plan it." (Mentor)

8.2.4 Attitude to school and pupil motivation

Several young people spoke about the way in which having a mentor had changed their attitude towards school work and exams. Mentors helped young people to develop goals and career aspirations and helped them realise the importance of school work in achieving those aspirations. Having a purpose or a goal that they could work towards, made young people want to do better in school.

> "I think he's just put my mindset in and shown me how important it is that I need my schooling an' that, and my grades and stuff." (Young person)

Pupils also noted that receiving constant encouragement from their mentors provided them with the confidence and the motivation to do well. The bond between some mentors and mentees seems to have created a positive cycle of feedback and encouragement; pupils do not want to let their mentors down and therefore are motivated to work harder.

> "It helps me feel like I'm targeting myself to do something because I know I have to report back to her and tell her how I've been doing in school, so knowing that helps me. It motivates me actually to try harder, work harder, do what I'm supposed to do in class, 'cause I feel more encouraged when she's happy and she tells me "That's really good" an' all that, so – yeah – it helps me try and work harder in school." (Young person)

8.3 Difference between mentoring programme and other school support services

During interviews with link teachers, it was highlighted that in addition to MCR Pathways, young people may have access to a number of different sources of support while at school. One view was that if young people are participants in more than one programme it can be difficult to unpick what effect each of the programmes has on a young person and to assess the impact of any one programme on a young person's academic performance.

Young people however, were able to articulate how MCR Pathways had impacted on them and how they thought the mentoring programme was different from other services. One young person reflected on how the MCR Pathways programme differs from other school services such as pastoral care because it provides the opportunity to develop a stronger relationship with the mentor.

> "[Having a mentor] was one thing that I was worried about as well when I got a mentor was like, "OK. So it's gonna be like a teacher that's being paid to sit and listen to me, but doesn't really care." Of course I understand Pastoral Care do care, but it wasn't like that intimate bond 'cause they've got hundreds of students that they need to see and make sure that they're doing OK, so like of course there are gonna be people that like slip through, and I was one o' those people who were like slipping by and not getting the help that I feel I needed...But with a mentor – because it is a one-on-one basis – it's much more intimate and there's much more attention on the issue, and I think that really helped me …" (Young person)

9 Positive destinations

9.1 Staying on at school

Young people reported that having a mentor had encouraged them to stay on at school and to complete higher levels of education. They felt that staying on in school would help them achieve their future goals such as going to university or entering a specific field of work.

> "I want to stay on to school so I can get all my main Highers for the rest o' my subjects, so I can go on to uni." (Young person)

Both mentors and teachers noted that young people who were at risk of dropping out had stayed on at school since getting a mentor.

> "Yes, she was going to leave in fourth year and she stayed on to sixth year." (Mentor)

> "I think he would have excluded the possibility of walking away…after the first year I don't think it ever…would have ever entered his head that it would not be good to go…right the way through the school and then look for some sort of college, or possibility [of a] university place." (Mentor)

The emotional support the young people received from their mentor could have a big impact on them feeling able to stay on at school. For example, one young person described how the support they received from their mentor during a time when they were dealing with a particularly difficult personal situation helped them stay on at school.

> "The sort of support I received from my mentor during that time [during a family bereavement] was invaluable. I've often said I probably wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that support, if that makes sense: If I didn't have the support, I feel I definitely would have just left school at 16 when I could have, which would have maybe been 2 or 3 months after it. I definitely think I would have had more serious mental health issues if it wasn't for the support that I received from [my mentor] and from the MCR Pathways staff as a whole to be honest." (Young person)

9.2 Help with career choices

There was a view among young people on the MCR Pathways programme that their mentor had helped them plan their post school destinations, whether it be to pursue further education or find employment. For those young people who already had an idea of what they wanted to do, their mentors had helped them fine-tune their future goals and provided guidance to pursue their chosen career path. For example, one young person noted that while they knew they wanted to pursue a career related to sports, their mentor had helped them formulate a career based on these interests.

> "At first, it was more Sports Science with just being an athlete in myself, but then after speaking with my mentor, I kind of got more involved in coaching, and then I felt like, "Well, teaching's OK, but I'm not really suited to a classroom environment", but in an environment where I'm more suited – so like sports-centric – it's something I really, really, really enjoy, so I've just changed it to that." (Young person)

Young people who had not considered their plans for the future, found that their mentors were able to help them come up with a plan based on their skills and interests.

> "At the start of the year I had no clue and then I was like…police officer, primary teacher, anything, and then like my mentor she like showed me like what my grades were, what I could get, and then like asked me what kind of stuff I was interested in and then we kind of narrowed it down." (Young person)

In addition to the support pupils received from their mentors, it was evident that the taster sessions organised by MCR Pathways were useful to many pupils. It gave them the opportunity to explore various career options and expand their potential options for the future.

> "I tried new things, every time I went on a taster I went to a new place, with new people, which helped me realise there was more out there than just that…just that one thing. There was more out there than just that." (Young person)

Mentors also helped research fields their mentees were interested in, so they could decide if it would be the right career option for them. Some young people noted that they would like to work in the same field as their mentors. They considered their mentors to be a role model and wanted to follow in their footsteps.

> "'cause she always...she always tells me about her work an' all that, and it sounds quite good, and the money's good, but what she's talking about it's quite interesting, and it sounds interesting, so it's something I want to do." (Young person)

In some cases where the young people wanted to follow the same career as their mentor, or showed an interest in working in a certain field but did not know what it really entailed, mentors took the initiative and made the effort to arrange work placements or have the young person meet someone working in the field. Such opportunities provided young people with the opportunity to judge for themselves if certain careers were suited for them, leading to some pursuing, and others rejecting, certain career paths.

9.3 Help with college and job applications

Mentors provided pupils with a wide range of career support from helping them with their college or job applications to helping with interview techniques.

> "…he's helped me wi' job applications, and he's helped me wi' some personal statements and stuff, so mostly just career-wise 'cause that's most o' the part I was ... focusing on." (Young person)

The young people described how their mentors had helped them to research options for college courses and find out about academic requirements for applying.

> "We just looked up…like he just helped me look up like the college...like colleges, and what I can do like with healthcare, and universities, and what like qualification I'm gonna need, so it was like good. He just helped me in that sense, o' just knowing what I need to do what I want to do." (Young person)

Mentors also provided more hands-on assistance to young people with their college applications.

> "Well because I go to UCAS for applying for university, so I had no clue about the personal statement, the teachers give you like a structure where she's (mentor) done it before so it's like she gave me like ideas and like what to put in it and what not to put in it. So now I've basically got a full personal statement." (Young person)

Mentors also helped young people look for employment and with their job interview skills. One young person noted that the advice he received from his mentor was helpful for him during his job interviews.

> "He was saying like what stuff to do when I was in an interview, and like the sort o' stuff they might ask you when you're there. He's helped me wi' that…It was helpful for when I went for my interview. I remembered what he'd said, and then was using it in the interview." (Young person)

9.4 Confidence to pursue their aspirations

Young people felt that their mentor gave them confidence to overcome obstacles and pursue their aspirations. Before having a mentor, young people described feeling limited by how other people would view their potential career choices, whether that be due to the type of career they wanted, which, for example, might not conform to gender stereotypes, or because the messages they had received up to that point made them feel that certain routes were not open to them.

One young person reflected on how having a mentor who encouraged their aspirations, rather than derided them, was a source of strength for them to pursue a university education.

> "Going back to the mentality in (area lived in); the concept that you could go to university was something that was non-existent. If we go back to the 2nd year before I got the mentor, I remember we do like a survey type thing. It's mostly to do with smoking and alcohol sort o' stuff, but they check your pathways type stuff as well, just to see how it changes over time…I remember sitting there and feeling deeply, deeply embarrassed to say that I wanted to go to university and do (name of subject) on the paper because it was saying, "No. That's not for you. That's for people from *other* places. That's for middle class children. You won't attain that. It's not possible. Don't even try." That was the mentality that was not just from the people *in* (area lived in), [but to] a degree from the teachers as well. That was the mentality that was forced upon you. But like

> when you get the mentor in this case, it was for me having somebody that's, "No. You can dae that if you want. If you want to do that, we will make sure that you can do that" and having someone to say that is amazing. It was extremely important for actually getting me to go." (Young person)

Furthermore, there is evidence that taking into account similar personal circumstances when matching mentors with young people can be beneficial. For example, one young person explained why having a mentor who was also dyslexic provided them with the confidence to pursue their own goals.

> "It was just talking to her. As simple as that sounds, it was that personal interaction – someone who's got to know me at this point genuinely saying that they think I could do that sort o' thing, and then showing me, "Well, I did it. I was in my 30s, and dyslexic" ... this is my mentor of course!... "in my 30s and dyslexic when I went to university. If I can do it then, you can do it now". That sort o' thing. I'm dyslexic by the way. I should make that clear as well. That's why that interaction was important! As simple as it sounds, having someone just to say that is more than enough." (Young person)

10 Additional benefits for young people

In addition to improvements in attendance, attainment and positive destinations there were a range of other benefits that young people gained from taking part in the mentoring programme.

10.1 Confidence

The MCR Pathways mentoring programme has been particularly successful at increasing the confidence of young people. Young people, mentors and teachers all commented that the mentoring process has increased the mentees confidence. Young people reported that before having a mentor they were shy and as a result did not really speak openly or take part in discussions and activities within and out of school. The increased confidence young people have experienced since having a mentor has made it easier for them to speak to others.

> "It's given me confidence, like I used to be like really shy, say if you'd come to me in fourth year I would be stuttering, not being able to answer these questions and getting really embarrassed. Now I'm like answering the questions…I think everyone should have a mentor." (Young person)

Young people explained that having a mentor particularly increased their confidence in speaking to adults, something which they valued. One explanation for this was that, because their mentor did not have authority over them (like a teacher or a parent), young people felt less judged, which enabled them to feel confident talking to their mentor.

> "It's definitely helped me feel a bit more confident in asking people questions…I'm able to ask people like my teachers or my lecturers a lot more questions now that I've spoke to my mentor and asked him a few questions. It's made me a bit more confident in that." (Young person)

Speaking regularly to their mentor helped young people develop their social skills and the increased confidence in speaking to others has led to young people taking up new opportunities, like public speaking in school or at MCR Pathway events.

> "Being able to engage with people with small talk and that sort of thing was non-existent. I was very much the kid that would just sit there in silence, and feel pretty terrible!, but that was just what I did. I didn't engage with anyone! But sort o' small talk skills especially developed a lot better as a result of just sitting talking to someone for an hour every 2 weeks, or an hour every week…MCR Pathways conferences is going about and try and drum up support for the mentor programme. Being able to go up and just talk to someone that I've never met before – an adult, someone that's greatly my senior – is something that definitely developed as a result of the chats I had with my mentor." (Young person)

Experiences of talking publicly, like talking at MCR Pathways conferences, has also helped young people build their confidence speaking in front of their peers. Young

people described how having the opportunity to speak in public helped them speak up in class which in turn helped them academically.

> "It was like because of him [mentor] my confidence was building quite a lot, and when I was doing more things outside o' school, my confidence was starting to come through in that, and I was like, "Well, if I can speak in front of a few hundred people that don't know me, at the Glasgow City Chambers, how can I not talk in front of 30 people that have known me since first year?" You know? It was kinda like, the way he [mentor] kinda rationalised it was like, "Put them side by side. Which is more daunting?", you know, and I think that became easier for me to go like, "Yeah. He's right. Thirty people doesn't equate with 400", so it became much easier for me to be open in class and be open to discussion, when, before, I just kinda try and not be seen, get by, and just do my work on my own, even if I wasn't understanding it." (Young person)

Mentors witnessed confidence growing in the young people they mentor. This has manifested in the way young people talk, how they hold themselves and in how they are performing and behaving at school.

> "For me it's mainly perceptions of self-confidence, even posture, the way that their language changes, it's less stutter, it's more controlled, I mean it's quite remarkable and I'm not even touching the education side, I'm talking about as a human." (Mentor)

10.2 Building relationships

Involvement in the mentoring programme was seen by young people and teachers as having positive social benefits. MCR Pathways mentoring was perceived to have helped young people develop the confidence and social skills to socialise more both inside and out of school and to make new friends, extending their social networks.

> "At the beginning, when I had the mentor, I was quite reluctant to talk or nothing. 'Cause I was so shy, I couldn't really do that much. And then when it came to like meetings, I will try and kind of like dodge them or something. I'd say, "Oh, by the way, I've got this on so can we just do it next time or something?"…Just gradually we just kind of got along better and everything, and then because of that I managed to boost up my confidence, ask people for help, managed to make more friends. Like I made a lot of friends now. Like outside of school, 'cause usually I have friends from school, but now I've managed to make friends outside of school and everything…I've just been able to open myself up to other people now." (Young person)

> "I think they're more engaged…they enjoy that contact with somebody that's, that is a role model for them, you know? I think that makes a great difference to them." (Teacher)

Having a mentor has also helped young people improve their relationships with other adults. Young people appreciated being treated as an adult and an equal by their mentor, and for some the relationship they developed with their mentor was one of friendship. For young people who had previously had negative relationships with

adults, developing a positive relationship with their mentor helped them understand that there are adults who want to support them in their development.

> "I guess it made me view adults differently; not everyone is out there to challenge you. Some people actually do wanna help!, you know, that they treat you like you're an adult." (Young person)

> "Another thing – I guess she's just a *friend*. Having an adult as a friend is like, it just impacts you differently I guess, 'cause it's not, as I said before, it's not someone that's like of *authority*. It's not a parent that's gonna like, "Oh yeah. I want the best for you.". "Well, yeah. You're my mum. Of course you do.", or a teacher that, "Yeah, it's your *job*. I get it.". It wasn't like that. She fully took time out of her day, and it just means like a whole different thing, and it just makes you wanna work harder, be better. Yeah. It was great." (Young person)

10.3 Emotional support

One of the most beneficial outcomes about having a mentor, identified by the young people and mentors, was the independent emotional support the young people received. Mentors were perceived as a non-judgmental source of support who helped young people work through challenging or upsetting circumstances.

> "I think it helps her having somebody out with her family…I think just having that independent person to talk to has helped." (Mentor)

> "He helps just *being* there. Like it's no always like, "Oh, in the future, what d'you want to dae? What you gonna dae? What you gonna dae?". It's no. It's like instant: "Oh, what happened this week?". That's also good because it's like you might have a really bad week, and then you get to 'bleurgh' to the mentor, so helps you just either keep your peace o' mind or calm doon and stuff like that." (Young person)

Having a mentor to talk to made young people feel more positive about the future and motivated to persevere through difficult times. There were mentors that introduced the young people they mentored to stress relief exercises to help them develop coping strategies to deal with the challenges they were facing.

> "It helps you keep positive. Definitely helped me keep way more positive than I was. It helped me look *forward* as well, and not dwell on the past. And my mentor always helped me think about what I've already been through, and the fact that I've overcome so much already, there's nothing that could stop me now. And, if I did go down, she would always say that, "There is nothing that you can't do." basically. She just motivated me, which is great!" (Young person)

> "I guess like if I was really feeling not great and stuff, she'd always just be there to tell me, "Yeah. Everything's gonna be all right. You're amazing. You're gonna do this. You're gonna pass your exams. Oh, this will be over soon". I think it's just encouragement just to keep going when times are hard. "It's not gonna be the same forever."" (Young person)

> "Sometimes if I'm so stressed [I] tell her all about it, she'll be like "OK. The next week, we can do like also a bit like yoga or we can do meditating and everything", so that's what we should do to like help me calm down. During my exam times or my prelim times, we do that as well, which was really, really helpful to be honest." (Young person)

Other young people noted that simply having someone they could talk to regularly and with whom they could share their concerns helped relieve their stress and anxiety. One young person noted that they were less stressed after getting a mentor and their family noticed an improvement in their general wellbeing.

> "Also, my family think that I looked less stressed as well! They're like, "Oh. You're not grumpy anymore!". And – yeah – my results were getting better as well." (Young person)

The emotional support mentors gave was not limited to helping a young person deal with a problem but could also extend to supporting them during positive experiences such as taking part in significant events.

> "At *events*, if he can, he's always there! He always gets his tickets…just small things that make a big difference…When I dae like a speech or something, getting to go off that wee stage and him patting you on the back saying, "Good job". That's good." (Young person)

10.4 Practical support

In addition to emotional support, young people received practical support from their mentors, with issues both in and out of school. One example was a mentor buying a calligraphy set to help with the young person's handwriting for the exams.

> "For instance, she bought a calligraphy set for me to help me. My handwriting was very bad in High School, but she sort of bought it, then sat there with me and helped me do the different things to help me improve my handwriting before the exams in 4th, 5th and 6th year. That sort o' thing, that was very important as well. Plus, she pushed me forward to get extra support in the exams as well – extra time, that sort of stuff I never would have got if it was on either my own onus or the onus of the school. Those were all very important." (Young person)

Young people appreciated that their mentors supported and motivated them to overcome barriers they experienced in being more independent. Examples of these given included help with self-travel and feeling enabled to socialise more regularly with friends.

> "She helped me with my homelife, with my mum and my dad and she helped me self-travel, which I was really scared of doing. She helped me get 'oot of the house more." (Young person)

> "Well, she's told me I ought tae like get oot my house a lot more. Go out wi' friends. I've been going out wi' friends now – out o' school, and *in* school, so I

was. And then I'm actually helping around the house and then I'm going out the next day wi' my friends and having activities." (Young person)

10.5 Self-esteem

Young people reported that having a mentor has led to improvements in their self-esteem. As previously mentioned, before having a mentor some young people felt that there were many things they believed they could not do, or issues that they could not overcome. Young people recalled how their mentor helped them identify challenges and supported them to overcome these. This process helped young people realise what they were capable of.

One way that mentors achieved this was by helping young people to recognise their strengths or by helping them to realise their potential. For other mentors it was giving young people the encouragement to follow their passions and the belief that they could achieve their goal.

> "I think one o' the best things about having a mentor, it's like another person that can extract a part of you that you can't see, and that talent that you kinda deny or you don't believe that you *have*, it's like they *can* see it, and it was really beneficial for me 'cause I was always like, "I can't do these things. I'm not gonna be able to do these things". And I was terrified of doing public speaking, and I was terrified of being in any way extroverted, and then [my mentor] was *so* extroverted it was kinda like, "No. You can't be introverted around me.", you know?! "I'm gonna put you on the spot". So it kind of became that, and then became much easier for me, and then it kind of just happened, and I became much more extrovert!" (Young person)

> "I like my sports and I was playing sports at a high level, but then I dropped out of it because of too many injuries, and I just got fed up, and then just speaking to him [mentor] made me get back in to that, and I'm gradually getting back to that level, and I don't think I would have even thought about going back in to that if it wasn't for him, so obviously like to thank him a lot for that." (Young person)

There were young people who were not used to receiving consistent and dedicated one-to-one support from adults. Therefore the commitment from their mentor to be a reliable source of support increased a young person's sense of self-worth.

> "One of the things that is really good with Pathways…is that they say to you if you can't do this don't do it because…when you make a commitment to a kid you can't just not appear. So hence then…probably after the first month we kind of met, I would say to her I'll always come, and she was like oh right so you don't see anybody else? And I said no I don't see anybody else, I just see you…I'm just solely coming here just for you and I'm here for the whole hour and I'll listen…You can ask me about school, you can ask me about your personal life, you can ask me about anything at all and I will try to help. It will go no further, and I am solely dedicated to you every week, for an hour…I will always be here for you if you need me…And I don't think the kid could believe that somebody actually…that she didn't know would actually take the time, or

energy, or…just anything…I think she was quite overwhelmed that somebody would actually spend that much time on her." (Mentor)

Finally, the mentoring programme improved young people's self-esteem by enabling young people to accept themselves. Through being involved in MCR Pathways mentoring programme, young people were able to meet other young people who had similar circumstances. This helped young people feel accepted and become more accepting of themselves.

> "Through MCR, she helped me meet a lot of different young people with the same problems and then I became friends with them and I've been able to accept myself for who I am and accept everybody else and become really more confident than I used to be." (Young person)

10.6 Teachers' perspective on wider impacts of mentoring programme

The link teachers also recognised the positive impact the MCR programme had on young people. Teachers have seen young people mature and their behaviour improve. They have also witnessed young people's self-esteem grow and their wellbeing increase.

> "His manner is not quite so reactionary. He's more respectful and tolerant if he's challenged…there's a difference to him, you know? – from a young man that would just explode / run away, that's changed dramatically." (Teacher)

> "I think they [mentors] improve inclusion which is improving their [young people's] wellbeing…the value that they place on seeing the person when you speak to young people about their mentors, they speak of them positively and they value that, and when you see them they meet with them in a public area in our school and when you see them it always looks like a positive engagement….And that can't but make a child feel more involved and more supported and more part of the community that's providing that service."(Teacher)

The link teachers believe the mentoring programme has added value to the school by providing capacity to work with young people in a way that the school on their own is unable to do.

> "You want young people to achieve and aspire and to be the best they can be, you know? To have an external group / organisation come in, have that structure in place and the links to just do that little bit more than what *we* can do, is so invaluable, you know? And young people need a link *away* from school…a young person needs that trusting adult…To have that other person or that other group of people, and then to have the security of them *collectively* as a group is really great." (Teacher)

10.7 Overall benefits of the mentoring programme

In addition to reflections on the wide-ranging specific benefits that the mentoring programme offered, as described in the previous chapters, young people also discussed what they perceived to be the best thing about the mentoring programme. This included: academic improvements; help planning for the future; increased confidence; and developing their communication skills (especially with adults). Some young people were surprised how helpful they found having a mentor; someone they could talk to openly and who could help them.

> "The good things are that if they're there for you, you can talk to them about *anything*, and they've got a lot of expertise, so they can help *you* out with stuff that you probably didn't think they could." (Young person)

There were young people that recalled the best thing about the mentoring programme was the range of opportunities that the programme had given them to take part in things they otherwise would not have had a chance to.

> "I think the networking side of it. So, because of MCR, I got involved with Young Glasgow Talent, and because of the mentoring programme I've met so many amazing people that I would consider as close to me as family. My mentor, especially, like he has been such a huge support, and has never once judged me and has never once doubted my ability." (Young person)

> "I don't really know what I'd be doing, or don't know what other experiences I would have had. I don't know if I would o' had the opportunities that I did have, or I don't even know if I'd be at [university]. Just honestly – yeah – it's just probably one o' the best things I've ever chosen to take part in…Just like it's just one big family…Everybody knows that, when you go down, you're no gonna get judged, and you can relate to every single young person involved as well." (Young person)

For some young people, becoming an MCR Ambassador was the best part of the MCR programme. Being an Ambassador gave them opportunities to meet new people, do new things, develop new skills and see how being involved in MCR had benefitted other young people. In addition, some young people particularly enjoyed being an Ambassador as it allowed them to help other new mentees.

> "I think it's just all the different people you meet, all the different opportunities you get…I think when we have events for young people and you see everything that all the young people have achieved, and the showcase – like showcase of young people – I think all that just makes us all really proud and feel really special, 'cause we don't always feel great about where we've came from, whatever, and I feel like when you go to big events like that, it just makes you...it just makes us feel proud o' ourselves, like proud of *all* of us as a big group." (Young person)

> “The best thing? Oh, this is a hard one! So much. The most enjoyable part was probably by 6th year of being made Ambassador, because I was a mentee as well as helping other mentees in my school…” (Young person)

Seeing what other young people have achieved made some young people feel proud of where they have come from and made them feel less alone. The consistent support offered by the MCR Pathways staff, who were always there for the young people to turn to, was also described as the best thing about the programme.

> “…meeting the other people that were in similar circumstances as me, and not feeling *as* alone as like I used to, because it was like, “You're disadvantaged” an' that, and then breaking that stigma of what “disadvantaged” meant, and then going and meeting all these other young ambassadors that were coming from completely different backgrounds, but we all shared a kinda common commonality, which was *talent*. And then that was so much fun, and I think that was probably my favourite part is the networking and getting to meet people and actually not feel alone!” (Young person)

> "They’re amazing people [MCR] and they’re always on hand to help and they never turn you away, which that’s what helped me, they never turned me away.” (Young person)

Overall young people experienced a wide range of benefits from participating in the mentoring programme and would recommend it to others.

> “Recommend *anybody* to get a mentor because it really does help you. It's really helped my grades, so I'm pretty sure it would help anybody else’s.” (Young person)

> “I just tell everyone to get involved in it, ‘cause it's such a beneficial programme for people to be in…you meet all different people, and you'll be a *part* o' something, so you'll feel good…you'll make new relationships wi' your mentor, and it can probably...it'll lead you to places.” (Young person)

> “I’d say just that it's probably the best thing that's happened to us! Honestly.” (Young person)

11 Challenges and facilitators

11.1 Challenges to effective mentoring and possible solutions

Among the young people, mentors and teachers interviewed, some had experienced no barriers to participating in the mentoring programme. One view was that the organisation of the programme made it as easy as possible for young people to take part.

> "The fact that it's in school, it's during the school day…I think it's a real positive because, you know, come to school and we balance their timetable, so we've taken them out of a subject to speak with their mentor and it's all balanced and measured, and there's a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make sure that they're not gonna impact on their educational journey as well, you know? So no. I can't think of anything negative." (Teacher)

However, some young people, mentors and teachers identified challenges they had faced participating in the mentoring programme and made some suggestions of how these challenges could be addressed.

11.1.1 Arranging a suitable time to meet

For the young people interviewed, a common challenge relating to mentoring meetings was arranging a suitable time to meet. Some young people found it challenging to arrange a time that fitted in with their mentor's schedule and that didn't clash with important class work. This was a challenge experienced by mentors too.

> "Probably getting out o' subjects when *he's* [mentor] available, and then it could be a day that I can't get out classes, so it's hard to try and arrange a day where I *can* get out to go and see him…It's a hard year for me in 5th year to go through, so there's nothing I can think o' that would help it." (Young person)

> "I have to fit in with the timetable and as you know work is very busy and unpredictable. So that can be a challenge at times…" (Mentor)

For some young people, finding time to meet was logistically challenging but mentors and mentees found that, on the whole, setting a date for the next meeting in advance was most effective.

> "For stuff like the difficulties of having a mentor, probably just scheduling meetings so it doesn't clash with important classes. Especially with the school timetable changing, that always makes it a bit more difficult, but if you're able to talk around that and make sure that the schedule that you plan your meetings are beneficial for both the mentee and the mentor then it should be fine…You'd have your mentor meeting, and then probably 10 minutes before the end, you'd just open up your calendar and then you'd cross-examine, say "Are you free this day, this period?", and, if it didn't work, you just kept going until you found a day

> that you weren't getting taken out of an important class, or he wasn't missing an important meeting or coming in late because he's had to come in on the backshift or anything like that. That's pretty much it." (Young person)

Some young people found it difficult to obtain permission to leave class to meet their mentor. Young people thought this was particularly difficult when a teacher didn't understand the nature and purpose of the mentoring programme.

> "Teachers in my school didn't understand what the mentoring programme was, so when I was leaving class to go see a mentor…some teachers got grumpy about it, like, "Where are you going?", like "Is it actually benefitting you?". They thought that I just wanted to leave class time, and they didn't understand that people benefit, so that was pretty annoying." (Young person)

Several young people thought that a possible solution to this challenge would be for MCR Pathways to work with teachers throughout the school to explain the benefit of young people taking part in the programme. They believed this could make it easier for young people to participate. There was also the view that once teachers started seeing for themselves the benefit mentoring was having on pupils, they were more willing to let young people out of class for mentoring. This was the experience of young people who had been mentored for a period of time.

> "Fifth year I was doing 5 Highers and trying to get out o' class at a time was pretty bad! Teachers werenae always happy aboot it I guess…Maybe just make teachers more aware that there is young people who are taken out to meet mentors." (Young person)

> "Well, I think at first because it was such a new programme in my school, when I was just in 4th year there was a lot of teachers like, "What is this? You don't need this.", but then when they were seeing the change in a lot o' the pupils that went from complete underachievers to like being at the top o' their classes always, and like a complete 180° in attitude change an' that, I think a lot of people in my school saw the benefits of it, so it became much easier to go out and meet my mentor and to have that one-on-one session." (Young person)

Not all young people found it difficult to arrange meetings with their mentors. Some young people found teachers were accommodating in allowing them to leave class to see their mentor, especially if it was during a double period when the young person could catch up. Other young people were able to schedule meetings with mentors for free periods or during certain periods that covered non-exam subjects. For young people in 5th or 6th year who had free periods, this was quite straightforward.

> "It's quite easy 'cause I usually see her during my PE, RE, PSE, like during the time, so I'm never actually out of an important Higher class and everything, so it's not as hard." (Young person)

Rearranging meetings

For mentors, a common challenge related to mentoring meetings was the communication of missed meetings and the process of rearranging these meetings. When some mentors first became part of the MCR mentoring programme, they found it

frustrating to discover, on arrival at the school, that the young person they were mentoring was absent. This left young people feeling guilty. One suggestion to address this challenge was to set up a process for the MCR Coordinator to phone or text the mentor to inform them if the young person they are mentoring is absent.

> "I regret no coming in, 'cause then I don't see them an' "Oh". And I don't like wasting people's time. It just happens." (Young person)

> "I feel MCR Coordinators in schools should phone or text the mentor on the day of the mentoring session to confirm if the young person is in school or not, rather than me having to *phone* in to do it." (Mentor)

A further challenge that followed a missed meeting was setting a date and time for the next meeting. As most meetings were arranged for the following week at the end of the mentoring session, if a pupil was unable to attend a session one week, the next meeting was not set up. As mentors and mentees did not have each other's contact details, the set-up of the next meeting had to be arranged through the MCR Coordinator. This process could sometimes take time and result in another week of mentoring being missed.

> "…if you miss a week sometimes getting an appointment for the following week can be quite tricky. So sometimes if you miss one week, you can end up missing two weeks because to arrange another appointment you've got to go through the MCR Coordinator, who's then got to find the mentee, who's then got to agree a time." (Mentor)

Mentors recognised that it was not possible to exchange contact details with their mentees but thought that more direct ways of communicating between mentors and young people would be beneficial.

> "Maybe some[thing] like a Dropbox or something where people are not actually contacting you *directly*, but, if you've got a message for them, like a message board." (Mentor)

In addition, there were mentors who felt there were circumstances when mentors and mentees felt there was a need to communicate between meetings. For example, one mentor gave the example of a young person who wanted to share news of exam results or the results of an interview with their mentor but were unable to do so until the next time they met. Not being able to do so could be frustrating for both the young person and the mentor.

> "There is maybe something about being able to contact out with school time, so in holiday periods and things – not necessarily for *help*, but for things like that, where they want to actually share that with somebody who they've formed a relationship with." (Mentor)

11.1.2 Frequency of meetings

Generally the young people interviewed said meeting their mentor once a week was appropriate and achievable in terms of getting time out of class. However, some young

people found it difficult to get through everything they wanted to in an hour and would have liked the option to meet their mentor more regularly.

> "I normally get to see her once a week but if I got to see her more…Maybe even like 2 periods a week, when she comes for the one period it's like you can only say so much about the week and there's so much happening and then you end up running over time and then she has to go. And then it's the next week and we talk about new things and there's not always a lot of time." (Young person)

Young people, mentors and teachers recognised that logistically it may be difficult for both mentors and young people to arrange to meet more often than once a week.

> "It works well, they come in for an hour, and it's that hourly contact once a week, I think if you said well let's up it to two, folk would be pushed and it wouldn't really work you know?" (Teacher)

There was also a suggestion that, as many young people are part of other initiatives in the school which offer them support, less frequent meetings might be appropriate for these young people.

> "You're saying 'frequency', but I think it's down to the *individuals*, isn't it, in terms of what they see as being useful for *them*. A certain young person will react differently depending on like once a week / twice a week…What I would say that for some young people who are part of MCR Pathways, they do, they sometimes can have even other mentors of another type…Or they have a lot of support from their pastoral care or deputy head. I do remember having a couple o' conversations wi' some [pupils] who were like, it's a bit *overkill* for them…almost like "I've got too *much* support", you know? "I need a bit o' *space* as well". So I think you need to watch that as well, that when you're setting these things up for MCR Pathways mentors that you're getting the full picture of 'What *else* are they getting in terms of support?' so that you don't overdo it basically." (Teacher)

11.1.3 Lack of private meeting space

There were teachers and young people who revealed that lack of access to a private space to meet a mentor was a barrier to young people which may prevent them from benefiting fully from the mentoring programme. Some schools were able to provide a range of different public and private spaces for mentoring sessions but, for those where only public spaces were available, it was felt that young people were apprehensive about talking about more sensitive topics.

> "Probably the school haven't enough rooms where like you can talk, before there was like a class we could go to whereas now it's in the open in the concourse where like anybody could walk past and hear what you're talking about." (Young person)

11.1.4 Personal issues

The personal issues that some young people faced were identified by young people, mentors and teachers as potential barriers for young people engaging fully with the

mentoring programme. For example, issues at home could impact on young people's attendance at school and therefore their ability to attend mentoring meetings which take place during the school day.

> "I'd say probably just life issues. That's probably it. Just family and stuff getting in the way…" (Young person)

There was a view that personal issues could also affect a young person's readiness to engage with one-to-one support and limit what they could get out of the mentoring process.

> "The ones [pupils] that I mentioned initially, who really, whose needs are a bit more complex…they needed a bit more support…they werenae maybe quite ready to sort o' deal wi' that level of kind of one-to-one support that it offers basically, so they didn't really gain anything out of it." (Teacher)

The lessons that a young person receives from their family and friends can also affect a young person's engagement with mentoring, and potentially the outcomes they achieve from mentoring and elsewhere. An example of this was an expectation that because someone was from a deprived area, they were not expected to go to college or university. Therefore, if a young person's friends and family do not believe the young person is capable of achieving something, then the young person themselves may not believe it. However, there was a view that having the right mentor can help young people reassess what they are capable of.

> "On a number of occasions he [mentee] would tell me about conversations he had had with his pal who, saying to him, "Oh, you, you'll never do well in life", you know?, and "You shouldn't *expect* to do well in life, because you come from an area of social deprivation" or what have you, and really undermining his confidence if you like…but I had one or two sessions with him to explain to him how what his friends thought was not important. It's what *he* thought and believed he could achieve in life that was what he had to focus on and hold on to. And we did quite a number of exercises on visualising future life and what have you…hopefully that's improved his *confidence*...if you're more confident, you're more likely to achieve more in life." (Mentor)

In addition, the personal circumstances of care-experienced young people can change suddenly, and without time to prepare for this change. For example, one mentor described a situation where their mentee moved home and school without warning, so ending their mentoring relationship very abruptly. This type of situation can be a challenge for both a young person and their mentor.

> "The…girl unfortunately got moved to another school, which was very difficult for us at the time because she was in residential care and it was done overnight, so I seen her one day and she was gone the next. That was very, very difficult and gave me a real understanding of what life is like for her in the care system." (Mentor)

11.1.5 Setting themselves apart from their peers

Finally, there was a view among mentors that because the availability of the mentoring programme was limited to certain pupils, a barrier to young people getting the most out of the mentoring programme could be a hesitance on the part of young people to take part in something that marked them out as different from their peers.

When asked what a solution to this challenge could be, one mentor said that the way they addressed it was by trying to normalise the mentoring programme and painting it in a positive light. The young person was concerned that they were getting a mentor because of something negative they were or were not doing. To allay these fears the mentor said that the mentoring programme was of mutual benefit for the mentor and the mentee.

> "If you put yourself in that young person's shoes, they already feel different, so why are they getting something else that's different to their friends do you know?…I think in the beginning it's like this was another thing that made her feel different and I think you have to work to get over that…she said to me why have I got a mentor? I said to her because it's an opportunity for me to get to know you and just to pass on some of my experience which hasn't all been positive. So I can…even kind of life skills I can help you with, so I wanted to make sure she didn't feel she was getting something because it was something she wasn't doing." (Mentor)

11.2 Facilitators to effective mentoring

Many of the positive benefits described in the previous chapters by young people, mentors and teachers are due to certain elements of the programme which are seen as key facilitators. These key facilitators are discussed in detail below.

11.2.1 Independent nature of mentors

For some young people, one of the most important elements of having a mentor was having someone independent they could speak to that was not a teacher or a family member. This helped young people engage in the programme. Young people felt that the relationship between a mentor and mentee differed from that between a teacher and pupil as the mentor had chosen to take part in the programme and was not being paid.

> "I think it's just the whole *authority* thing, like you know your mentor's no gonna get you in trouble for something that you might decide you're gonna do, or your teachers are gonna moan at you for if you went and said something to your teacher. Whereas if you say it to your mentor, like they're no really gonna judge you or get you in to trouble. Yeah." (Young person)

> "I think it helps her having somebody out with her family…I think just having that independent person to talk to's helped." (Mentor)

> "It really can't be understated, the importance of it. I come from (a neighbourhood in Glasgow) and the culture there is…sort o' *trapped* in that

> mentality of being told that you can't do certain things and go certain places. Having someone from outside of that – someone who it didn't matter to, and all that sort of stuff – was extremely important…especially 'cause the teachers, obviously they're paid to do their job, and there's a degree to which you feel as if you're on their *remit* so to speak, and like you're just a box they have to tick. It's not a great place to sort o' jump off from when you're trying to do a lot of social wellbeing type stuff…" (Young person)

Young people also felt that their mentor wanted the best for their future, regardless of what it was, while they felt a teacher may try and steer them towards further education.

> "It gives you somebody to talk to that's not a *teacher*…It's like somebody else's opinion that's *not* a teacher. D'you know what I mean?...I feel like a teacher always wants you just to go to college 'cause it looks good for like *them*…See the mentor? It's like they actually want the best for you. Like I know a teacher does as *well*, but like they're *wanting* you to go to college, whereas like a mentor if you say you don't want to go to college then they're not gonna make you go." (Young person)

11.2.2 Developing a trusting relationship

Teachers, young people and mentors identified that, for mentoring to have a positive impact, rapport and trust needed to be developed between the mentor and young person. At times this came from having shared interests. However, some young people were shy and quiet to begin with so mentors had to find ways to start building rapport. One mentor described bringing in items of interest to the meetings to spark discussion.

> "When I started off doing it I was a bit apprehensive about what are we going to talk about for an hour? What I did at the start was I always took something that I thought might be interesting…with a view to generating a topic for discussion …that was how when we started I always made sure that we had something to talk about to fall back on if we looked as though we were going to dry up. I don't need that now." (Mentor)

For others, the confidential nature of the relationship they had with their mentor allowed them to build up trust. Young people felt that they could confide in their mentor more than they could confide in a teacher. This was in part because the mentor was independent from other parts of their life and the young person felt more anonymous. Young people said that this made them feel like they weren't being judged for what they said.

> "I trust a mentor better than I do a teacher because my teacher did'nae…when I've asked them to keep it confidential sometimes they've gone and told somebody else and then somebody else has found out, and somebody else and that's what made me…I'm going to keep my mouth shut noo. And then I met my mentor, I could tell her anything and she would keep it between us unless it was really serious." (Young person)

Not all young people thought that the relationship they had with their mentor differed from their relationship with teachers to any great extent. The only difference they saw was the amount of time they spent with them.

> "Well they're similar because they're both really kind of the same thing, except your guidance teacher you can go and see throughout the whole day at school, whereas your mentor you can only see like an hour out of your whole week." (Young person)

11.2.3 A successful matching process

The matching process was perceived to be a good process which worked well and led to good matches being made, a key element in the success of the programme.

> "We hit it off right away, as soon as we kind of met it was instant, probably the first or second time I thought you know…I haven't got children, but I thought god if I ever wanted a child I would have you…I thought she was just lovely…she was everything that they said she would be." (Mentor)

> "I think it was a really good match. I could'nae have asked for a better mentor." (Young person)

Mentors, teachers and young people liked the personalised nature of the matching process and thought this approach was central to finding good matches.

> "It's very personalised for every young person…when I started the programme and they were saying about getting me a mentor, I thought it would be like a generic *random* person that would come in, and they'd be like, "Hi. I'm Bob. I don't know anything about you", but it's like, before anything, it's like, "What are your interests?", and it's all specified to like who *you* are, and getting someone that would be compatible with that, and I think that's the best part of it, and I don't think there's really anything – to me *personally* – that I think could be improved." (Young person)

> "In my matching process, I was interviewed by…it was 2 or 3 people for an hour I think, to just to get, you know, in to my, what I did in work, and what I did out with work, and, you know, some of my values and beliefs…I felt I was being interviewed for a *job*! I came out o' that thinking, "Jings! That was tougher than I thought!". But that was quite a good session I think, to get to understand *me*, and then I was put with my young person…and there was a good synergy there between us." (Mentor)

Not all mentors felt that enough had been done to explore their interests in depth to ensure that the matching process was as effective as possible and felt that more needed to be done to capture their interests in the initial process.

> "Well the only thing you could improve would be…in that sort of initial process of when the mentor and mentee express an interest in getting involved in the program, is gathering information about what gets them, what their interests are and what they like talking about, what they like doing, so you need to be maybe to be more probing questions there as to what types of things do you do, how you got on in your career, what you do in your spare time. So it's probably just making sure those questions are asked at the time for both the mentor and the mentee." (Mentor)

Prioritising an appropriate match over a quick match was valued by young people, teachers and mentors. A successful match was seen as central to sustaining engagement in the programme.

> "I kind of like the process that they did with the matching, so pretty much they base it off of *your*self rather than just a random match, so it can take [up] to a week, a month, but to be honest the wait is worth it, rather than just getting put with some random person that doesn't really relate to you that much." (Young person)

> "I think the matching process is great, they get it. They take their time, you know? It's no' like, you know, someone applies to become a mentor and then they just put them in with *any* person…I *like* that term 'waiting to be matched' because it's about finding the right person to fit the young person, not shoehorning the young person in to a service, which is really good." (Teacher)

11.2.4 Key matching criteria

Participants mentioned a range of different reasons that made a match successful. Many young people and mentors stated that having similar interests helped them quickly build a good relationship. Shared or similar interests often helped build rapport and enabled discussions about school work, attendance or future destinations.

> "I think it's a *good* match…I feel like we just like we see things the same way. Like we've got the same interests." (Young person)

> "The MCR they try and match the mentor and the mentee so we've both got an active interest in sport which is good, so we talk about that. We talk about current affairs, and stuff like that so when you've actually got common interests you can talk about the common interests, when you talk about the common interests that all sort of feeds back into what they're doing academically at school subject wise. Whether that be just talking about English, about debating, or talking about hobbies and that sort of stuff." (Mentor)

While for some young people and mentors, having similar interests helped them get along and build rapport, for others, having a similar personality or outlook as the person with whom they were matched made that person relatable and helped the young people to feel more relaxed with their mentor.

> "'Cause I'd say he has the same mindset as me…I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to go in to working, and he said he was the exact same. …He's *like* me basically. I don't know how else to explain that: He's got the same opinions. He's got the same views…I just connect wi' him really good!" (Young person)

A common life experience or feeling that their mentor understood the challenges they have faced was another reason why young people thought their mentor was a good match for them. This made young people feel that their mentor could relate to them.

> "For me, it definitely did, and I think they were very thorough because I actually lost my mother when I was young, so I think that was why I was linked with her,

and, at the time, I thought that's really quite astute to put somebody in who's been through that." (Mentor)

In addition, a view expressed by a teacher, was that young people being able to take part in MCR activities from S1 onwards helped young people to transition to having a one-to-one mentor later on.

> "Yeah. Definitely. I think It's the progression, so it's the maturity growing in. There's...the work they're doing with them early on is about that aspiration and that confidence and that, you know, ability to know you *can* do well, and then the progression from having...moving on to having a mentor and having someone take the time to talk to you." (Teacher)

Matching challenges

Matching did not work all of the time at all schools. Young people, mentors and teachers recognised that it was not possible for all matches to work and there was a perception that it might take a couple of attempts to find the right match. Sometimes, despite having common interests and beliefs, the match does not 'click' and people are re-matched.

> "I've got a good relationship with *my* mentor, but I probably see other people if they don't get matched right, it's just like it's two people that don't really know each other and *can't* really know each other because they've got different personalities." (Young person)

> "There's no exact science to it…you could set something up based on interests and ambitions and just, you just think that they'll work well together, and they just *don't*, you know? It's just a personality. They don't click. So there's a couple o' times that happened, and that's fine, you know? We kinda expected that…it was a case of just trying to do it again and get the good will of the person who's been the mentor, and just try and match them wi' someone *else*…also for the young person, see if we can get somebody else that's gonna be more in tune with them." (Teacher)

Mentors, teachers and young people all recognised that the chemistry of a match was important in enabling young people to benefit from the mentoring experience.

> "I was matched with this young lad because he was wanting to do something in the world of business, and that's what I've spent 40-odd years doing, so in that sense I was deemed to be a good match for him…I think the *specificness* of the match is less important than the *chemistry* of the match, and I think it's more important that you work with somebody where you can build their confidence, build their trust, and talk about the issues – 'cause, you know, at the end o' the day I think it's helping them to get some self-worth is probably the most valuable thing with MCR." (Mentor)

12 Mentor experience

12.1 How the training prepared people for being a mentor

There was a range of different views amongst mentors as to how well the mentor training prepared them for the reality of being a mentor. Mentors complemented the quality of the trainers and how well it had prepared them for mentoring, as well as ideas of how training could be improved. Positive aspects included clear and concise training and the attitude of those delivering the training.

> "…the trainers were phenomenal, the trainers were really, really good…she (name of trainer) was really informative…there was videos of kids talking about their experience, the experience that they've had with mentors, and how they thought themselves that it had helped them along the way…No I found the training really informative and they said at the time there will be support, we'll help you along the way and there was, anytime that I ever needed any help, any of the Coordinators, there was always someone on hand." (Mentor)

> "The people that carried out the training were focused and to my mind clearly believed in the project, it wasn't a tick box run through thing…It was concise, it didn't waste time, I think they realised that the volunteers wouldn't necessarily be people that maybe didn't have a lot of time…I thought they kept it within reasonable parameters." (Mentor)

The hands-on group work element of the training was also seen as both enjoyable and useful.

> "I thought that the group work was good where they gave you a problem, a social type problem, not necessarily related to mentoring young people, and then the group was asked to come up with their views on it and what the right action would have been. I found that more useful than I thought it would be." (Mentor)

Having mentees in the training was highly valued. Mentors felt it helped illustrate the positive impact the mentoring programme can have on young people. This allayed concerns regarding the programme for one mentor.

> "They did have pupils, or ex-pupils who'd been through mentoring and were able to talk to it from their side, because when you go into that you think am I really going to make any sort of difference here or is it just…going through the motions? It's always good to hear it from somebody who's been through it." (Mentor)

A range of different views was expressed regarding the extent to which mentors felt prepared on completion of the training. One view was that the training had not adequately prepared a mentor for the realities of their role. Although the training provided mentors with the tools they needed, this did not mean that all mentors felt

prepared for the reality of the challenges associated with mentoring. For example, one mentor described the challenge of having a mentee who did not want to engage with them.

> "I think the training was good insofar as it reviewed the types of young people that would be involved, the sorts of backgrounds that they were coming from, and the complexities that that presented. For me, the one thing that the training did *not* prepare me for was the frustration…that *I* felt with my young person when I started working with him, which I understand is quite normal, in that they weren't, they wouldn't turn up for appointments, they wouldn't engage in the process. It was very difficult to get them to communicate. As a result of that I got very frustrated, and I think the training could, and should, do more on preparing the mentor for that." (Mentor)

Another view was that it would be difficult for any training to fully prepare someone for the realities of being a mentor. Being a mentor depends on the specific relationship built between the mentor and the mentee. Therefore, mentors thought training could only provide them with a foundation to build on.

> "I don't think you could actually be trained to be a mentor to be honest with you. It very much depends on the relationship you build up with your young person, so just to give you…its quite important to talk about things like what you could say and couldn't say and sort of laying the ground rules as it were. But I think it would be difficult in any walk of life, never mind MCR, to say go on a training course and come and say tick the box you're a mentor. I think you just have to…it's all about building relationships. You don't know how you're going to get on until you actually get your young person." (Mentor)

Another perspective was that the training had, in fact, provided adequate preparation for the potential challenges of being a mentor. Among those who had been trained several years ago, there was a view that the training had been quite basic at the start of the programme although they felt that the training had covered the needs of the young person very well. Among those trained more recently, there was a particular appreciation that the training drew on the experiences of previous mentors to help new mentors work though challenges they may face, particularly when initially trying to develop a relationship with their mentee.

> "They explain to you what their aim of the project is. But they also go through each process that might happen to you, when you're mentoring…at the training it was explained that some young people may be shy, and it may take time for them to feel comfortable enough to speak and open up. The message was to be patient. The trainers shared experiences of previous mentors of things they tried to break the ice with their mentees. For example, bringing in cards or a magazine to find a shared interest." (Mentor)

One element mentors thought was not covered sufficiently in the training was around what mentors should do if they, themselves, needed support. Mentors did describe experiencing challenges when they first began and also described how the MCR Coordinator was there to help with these challenges. One mentor believed the training

has developed over the years and that the current training is much improved in this aspect.

> "If you look at the training program now it's…yes it's of a very high standard…Oh even just the young person's aspect is…what we have now is fantastic case studies, understanding of how the program impacts, research and evidence around what works that all wasn't there in the beginning…I think…that they've recognised the gaps in the early days and speedily set about filling them, no I don't feel disadvantaged by that, no." (Mentor)

> "The [MCR] Coordinator is in the school and you can always go there, and I have done…any time I've had an issue, I'm not talking about big issues, I always manage to get it sorted out…I've had plenty of support anytime I've asked for advice." (Mentor)

The support offered by the MCR Coordinator was seen as reassuring to mentors. For example, one mentor described how they were not sure that they were doing the right thing as a mentor because the young person was looking for more emotional support rather than career support. They had then spoken to the Coordinator who reassured them that they were doing the right thing by being led by the needs of the young person. The mentor found this support helpful.

12.2 How the training could be improved

A few mentors had ideas about how the training could have been improved to better prepare them for the role. One suggestion was that it would be valuable for the training to include an overview of the current school system as some mentors may not be familiar with it.

> "What was probably missing from my point of view would be an overview of…it's a long time ago since I was at school, a long time since my kids were at school, it would just be an overview of the school system, what they do in first year, second year, third year, fourth year, fifth year and sixth year, how they choose subjects, academic qualifications, entries into Further and Higher Education, just an overview of that would be quite useful." (Mentor)

Bespoke MCR additional training events have been set up for mentors who support S5 and S6 pupils. One of these events that was mentioned was delivered by higher education institutions in Glasgow with the aim of helping mentors better support pupils if they wanted to apply for university. One of the mentors said they valued this support and felt others could benefit from this approach.

> "And the other thing that I found extremely helpful was the input from the universities…So they arranged for mentors who were working with year 5 and 6 to be able to go along to a session…and actually speak directly to the people who are responsible for the university intake…my kids are grown up, so I had no idea and all about personal statements and how to go about choosing courses and how to fill in the UCAS forms, so it certainly helped me be a lot more practical help to her when she was filling her stuff in…And the universities were well clued up on what MCR was, and they were also very clued up on the

kind of extra funding that children who'd been struggling with, or maybe in residential services or whatever, could, you know, the extra support that they can get to get in to university, and that was a complete eye-opener to me and to the mentee as well, so that was an excellent…It is really good." (Mentor)

One mentor also mentioned not being fully prepared for the format mentoring would take and the length of time they were committing to by becoming a mentor. Although they acknowledged that their lack of awareness was due to them not having read the relevant information properly, they thought it is important to ensure at the start of the process that all mentors are aware of the commitment involved. They explained that they would have found it helpful if they had been made aware at the beginning that the mentoring would be one-to-one (rather than group based) and that the mentoring relationship could last for many years.

> "I didn't realise it would be for so long and I didn't realise that it would actually be like a one on one and you would be…specifically with this one person for so long, maybe like 2 years… but that was completely my fault I would say. I kind of thought you would maybe be mentoring…maybe 2-3 kids that maybe just needed some help…you would go in and you would kind of mentor them and say oh right I think you should maybe do this and you could maybe do that…I didn't really realise that it would be…quite…um…quite as intense actually." (Mentor)

There was also a suggestion that going forward, MCR should alter their message on the time commitment of being a mentor. It is advertised as an hour a week, and while this is the length of a session, once travel is taken into account, the time commitment is longer. This was felt to be important information for people to know before applying to be a mentor as not everyone can get that time off work.

> "But that's the only thing that I would say I feel that it's a shame that it's kind of promoted as just…50 minutes to an hour…it's not an hour. You have to get there, and you have to get back so you're going to be a minimum of 2 hours no matter where you are, minimum." (Mentor)

There was also concern raised that there was not enough detail on child protection in the mentor training and a feeling that this needed to be strengthened.

> "…the thing I felt – and I've spoken to other mentors as well – the child protection issues I didn't really feel were covered particularly well…The child protection stuff just felt as if there wasn't enough *of* it. Certainly, I was very clear that, if anything happened, I would go straight away to get help, but that's partly because I've worked with vulnerable young people in the past. I don't know if you would have felt as confident if you didn't have that background." (Mentor)

One mentor suggested that having feedback from the schools as to the impact they think the mentoring programme has had would be beneficial.

> "It would be good to get an overall feedback from the school, probably like this, being part of this study, do the school think that the mentoring thing actually works and are they 100% supportive of if? Or do they think it's something that gets in the way and taking kids out of class and all that sort of stuff. I'm never

entirely sure about that sometimes you know? It would be good to get a confirmation even from the Head of the school saying thanks mentors, you hear from your MCR Coordinator but actually does the Head Teacher think what your doing is good and thanks very much!" (Mentor)

For more experienced mentors, a focus on training and events specific to their needs would be helpful. They appreciated that MCR runs a range of different events but it was not always clear which of these would be beneficial to those with limited time who already had a few years of experience as a mentor.

> "They do a lot of sort of follow-up bits 'n' pieces, I think MCR do quite a lot, they maybe try and do too much because you just don't have the time to go to all the events that they hold. So…they probably spend too much and need to be a bit more focused. And the longer you are a mentor, the less likely you are to go to MCR type events I think. It's maybe the ones that are just starting off it's probably more useful for them. Whether they want to look at sort of whether you have been a mentor 1 years, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years. Just here's a course for those that have been a mentor for 5 years to get feedback as opposed to somebody that's just been there for 2 weeks because you've got different experiences." (Mentor)

In addition, ensuring that the day of the week on which training for mentors takes place should be rotated, was suggested as a way of enabling more mentors to attend training.

12.3 Positive impact of mentoring programme on mentors

Regardless of any challenges mentors had faced in the role, many articulated that they could see the value of the programme and the positive impact it can have for young people.

> "It's such a fantastic scheme for young people, I can see the difference it's made to three [young people] that I've supported, and it does what it says on the tin. It absolutely transforms outcomes, I wish more people would mentor, it's very, very hard to get people to mentor unless they're passionate about young people. So…if you know or anyone else knows people that are passionate about young people please get them to mentor." (Mentor)

Some mentors also spoke about the impact being a mentor had on them, and the joy it can bring them.

> "I think it works well, I think again I've got experience across colleagues, like me they love their time with their young person, it's the highlight of their week. So that tells me a lot." (Mentor)

For some, it opened their eyes to the reality of some young people's lives and also the great resilience young people have.

"I find it really heart-breaking actually I do…I said to her you know is there anything bothering you? And she would give me some, she would tell me some things and things like that. But she'll go 'I'm just not going to let it bother me', but sometimes you would see her wee eyes filling up or something and you would think to yourself how robust, that's just phenomenal that you are managing to actually, that you're actually managing." (Mentor)

13 Conclusions

Throughout Scotland there are a number of mentoring programmes for young people of all ages which address a diverse range of outcomes. Few of these however, are targeted at care-experienced young people and fewer still aim to improve educational outcomes. Research into the impact of mentoring programmes on young people's educational outcomes is sparse, particularly in the UK. Research literature exploring the educational outcomes of mentoring programmes exists for other countries, however the findings are not conclusive. For example, a meta-analysis of 74 evaluations of mentoring programmes in the USA from 1999 to 2010 found that mentoring had a positive effect on behavioural, social, emotional and academic outcomes of young people.[7] In contrast, another smaller review of six school-based mentoring studies, found fewer positive impacts and concluded that the programmes offered poor value for money.[8] While the differences in the size of these reviews and types of programmes evaluated make it difficult to make comparisons across studies, there is some consensus that the current evidence base on mentoring appears to be inconclusive[9,10] and is still being developed.[11] More robust research is required in the UK to explore the impacts of mentoring programmes, including those for care-experienced young people, specifically those related to educational outcomes.

MCR Pathways is a school-based mentoring programme for care-experienced and disadvantaged young people which aims to improve young people's school attendance and participation, educational attainment and post-school positive destinations. To the best of our knowledge the evaluation of MCR Pathways is the first of its kind to include qualitative, quantitative, and cost-benefit analysis data to assess the impact of mentoring on care-experienced young people's educational outcomes. The cost-benefit analysis data will be published as a separate report in 2020. The key findings from the quantitative and qualitative elements of the evaluation are as follows.

To what extent did young people experience educational improvements as a result of their participation in MCR Pathways and were targets for engagement, attainment and destinations reached?

Both the quantitative and qualitative evaluation data have shown that care-experienced young people in Glasgow have experienced educational improvements as a result of their participation in MCR Pathways.

[7] DuBois, D.L, Portillo. N, Rhodes, J.E, Silverthorn, N, Valentine, J.C., 2011. How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Supplement, 12(2), pp.57–91.
[8] Wood, S. & Mayo-Wilson, E., 2012. School-Based Mentoring for Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Research on Social Work Practice, 22(3), pp.257–269.
[9] Sosu, E., & Ellis, S.,2014, Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
[10] Education Endowment Foundation, 2018. Mentoring, Teaching and Learing Tooklit. < https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring/>
[11] Shaw, B., & Bernardes, E., 2018. Forging futures through mentoring: A risk worth pursuing? UK: Children's Commissioner. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Forging-futures-through-mentoring-CCO-April-2018-1.pdf>

The quantitative research has shown that mentored care-experienced young people in Glasgow have far exceeded the targets set in the Social Bridging Finance initiative[12] for levels of retention at school after school leaving age; attainment; and moving on to a positive destination after leaving school.[13] In addition, there were statistically significant differences between the outcomes of care-experienced young people who were mentored and care-experienced young people who were not mentored. Put simply, care-experienced pupils who were part of the MCR Pathways programme were doing significantly better in terms of the outcomes that make up the Social Bridging Finance targets compared with those who were not part of the programme from the 28 Glasgow schools. For example:

- **Retention**
    - 7 in 10 (70.7%) mentored care-experienced pupils stayed on in school after school leaving age compared with 58.8% of non-mentored care-experienced pupils and a national Social Bridging Finance target of 60%.
- **Positive destinations**
    - 8 in 10 (81.6%) mentored care-experienced pupils moved on after school to a positive destination compared with just over 6 in 10 (62.0%) of those who are not being mentored and a national Social Bridging Finance target of 61%.
- **Attainment**
    - 7 in 10 (73.1%) mentored care-experienced pupils gained SCQF Level 4 qualifications in Maths and English, compared with just over half (52.3%) of non-mentored care-experienced pupils and a national Social Bridging Finance target of 64%.
    - Around 9 in 10 (87.8%) achieved at least 5 SCQF Level 4 qualifications, a significantly higher proportion than the six in ten (61.7%) non-mentored care-experienced pupils and a national Social Bridging Finance target of 75%.
    - Around 9 in 10 (87.8%) mentored pupils achieved at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification compared with 6 in 10 (61.0%) among non-mentored pupils and a national Social Bridging Finance target of 84%.
    - Over 5 in 10 (55.8%) mentored care-experienced pupils achieved at least three SCQF Level 5 qualifications, compared with 4 in 10 (39.7%) non-mentored care-experienced pupils and a national Social Bridging Finance target of 51%.

[12] See Chapter 1 Introduction (Sections 1.1 and 1.2) for further information on the Social Bridging Finance initiative.
[13] Using MCR's definition of a positive destination which is further education, higher education or employment.

It was not possible to analyse outcomes separately for specific sub-groups to determine whether MCR Pathways mentoring was more effective for some groups of young people than others. The statistical power of such an analysis would be too low to match individuals robustly and provide an estimate of impact.

The qualitative evaluation explored in more detail the different ways in which the MCR Pathways mentoring programme has had an impact on young people's educational outcomes.

First, the mentoring relationship is described as building young people's confidence and self-esteem. This is seen as having a wide range of benefits including helping the young people address issues in their lives outside school, which has improved their school attendance; confidence to ask for the academic support they need in school to improve their attainment; and, in terms of potential career choices, mentoring is described as giving them confidence to overcome obstacles and pursue their aspirations for the future.

Second, the mentoring relationship provides young people with a source of emotional and practical support that is independent from school and their family, which young people value. This independent, non-judgemental relationship gives young people the opportunity to explore how they might change the way they approach challenges and think through new possibilities for their futures. By helping young people change their attitude towards school and improve their attainment, mentors have helped young people make the decision to stay on at school for 5th and/or 6th year instead of leaving after 4th year. Mentors also helped young people plan their post-school destinations by: helping them think about options based on their skills and interests; providing opportunities to explore various career options; and providing guidance on how to pursue their chosen career path.

The practical help that mentors are able to provide also has a positive impact on attainment and post-school destination choices. Mentors help the young people with their school work, developing study skills and managing exam-related stress. They also help young people pursue further education or employment by helping them with interview techniques, and college, university and job applications.

Having a mentor to talk to made young people feel more positive about the future and motivated to keep going through difficult times. Mentors felt that they had been able to support young people to develop positive behaviours such as discipline, responsibility and reliability. Being involved in the mentoring programme was also described as having a positive impact on mentors too. Some said their mentoring meetings were the highlight of their week and for some it opened their eyes to the experience of young people in care.

What were the enablers or barriers that influenced the achievement of educational outcomes?

The qualitative evaluation has identified a number of factors that have contributed to the effectiveness of the mentoring programme in achieving these outcomes for young people. A personalised matching process that matched people based on similar interests, personality and / or life experience was deemed a success by young people,

mentors and teachers. Having a tailored matching process facilitated young people and mentors to build a rapport and in time develop a trusting relationship which was essential for enabling young people to receive the positive outcomes from mentoring.

The mentor training was another factor that contributed to the success of the mentoring programme. On the whole, mentors felt the training provided them with the knowledge and tools they needed to be an effective mentor, though being a mentor was not without its challenges. Mentors praised the mentoring training stating it was clear, well-structured and led by quality trainers.

Since the evaluation was commissioned, further changes have been made to the mentoring training. Core mentor training now covers the Curriculum for Excellence, SCQF level qualifications, and a Mentor Hub contains additional resources. In addition to the mentor training, mentors are offered an optional accredited leadership course from Strathclyde Business School. More enhanced training courses are offered annually to all mentors on the Curriculum for Excellence, SCQF level qualifications, college, university and employment which are delivered by specialists in each of these fields.

While feedback was overwhelmingly positive, the mentoring programme did experience some challenges although they were not universally experienced. Young people, mentors and teachers suggested ways in which these challenges could be overcome, many of which MCR Pathways has begun addressing. The most frequently identified challenge faced in the mentoring programme was arranging suitable meeting times that fitted in with the young person's and mentor's timetables. This included young people being refused permission to get out of class by teachers who may not have had sufficient understanding of the benefits of the mentoring programme. Some addressed this challenge by arranging meetings in advance and choosing to meet during free periods, double periods or during classes without exams. This is an approach that is also suggested by MCR to young people and mentors. Young people suggested additional work could be done with teachers in schools to help them understand the benefit of mentoring.

Some mentors found it challenging to rearrange missed meetings as communication between mentors and mentees was facilitated by MCR Coordinators which could be time consuming. Mentors thought a system to enable quicker communication would be useful. Since the evaluation was commissioned, MCR Pathways has implemented a new policy to facilitate communication, this includes all meetings being agreed in advance, with Pathways Coordinators following up on a weekly basis with mentors and pupils on meeting dates to ensure this policy is being followed. In addition, MCR Pathways has introduced an electronic Mentor Hub booking system which enables mentors to change and confirm new dates.

Furthermore, MCR Pathways has implemented a programme of work to increase staff awareness and buy-in of mentoring and the positive impact it can have on young people's attendance, attainment and positive destinations. This includes five School Links meetings per annum, input at whole school in-service days and annual head teachers' meetings.

Some specific challenges mentioned, that had the potential to act as a barrier to young people engaging in the mentoring programme included: the personal issues of a young person resulting in them not being ready for one-to-one support; the lack of private meeting spaces for mentoring in some schools which made young people concerned that their conversations would be overheard; and, although young people expressed the positive feelings connected with being part of the programme, there was also concern that taking part in a programme that was only available to one specific group of young people could make them feel different from their peers. These challenges are largely outside the direct control of MCR Pathways but are helpful to acknowledge and to consider whether anything can be done to address these if the programme is rolled out to schools in other areas. However, in relation to young people not being ready for one-to-one support, MCR Pathways offers groupwork to S1 and S2 pupils to help prepare them for having a mentor. In addition, to begin the mentoring process MCR requests that the school, young person and parent/carer are all involved in the process. For care-experienced young people that schools deem not to be ready for one-to-one mentoring, MCR Pathways also offer alternative opportunities. And in the event of a young person's situation changing and they wish to have a mentor, they will be offered re-engagement support.

In summary

Overall, both the qualitative and quantitative data have shown that MCR Pathways' mentoring programme has had a positive impact on the educational outcomes for care-experienced young people. MCR Pathways was shown to have a statistically significant, positive impact on all three quantitative outcomes. The mentoring programme has:

- improved attainment by increasing the proportion of care-experienced young people who are achieving at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification
- helped young people to stay on at school (after school leaving age)
- supported young people to move on to positive destinations of college, university or employment.

Interviews with young people, mentors and teachers have illustrated the ways in which the mentoring programme has contributed to improvements in young people's school attendance and attainment and how it has helped young people move on to positive destinations. MCR Pathways has also been shown to have additional positive outcomes for young people including increased self-confidence and self-esteem and providing young people with the practical and emotional skills to thrive after school.

Appendix A. Analytical considerations for the PSM Analysis

PSM works in two stages. First, the propensity score must be estimated. This indicates the likelihood that the individual would be 'allocated to intervention' (i.e. would be eligible for, invited and then decide to take part in MCR Pathways). For this to be effective, the information used to estimate the propensity score must be highly predictive of taking part in the programme.

The propensity scores were estimated using non-linear regression (probit) and included a wide selection of information thought to determine intervention allocation such as take up of free school meals and whether the pupil had an additional support need.

However, the pool of comparator pupils from which the control group was selected were already similar in some regards as they were all either care-experienced or previously in care and were based in the same geographical area, Glasgow. Otherwise disadvantaged pupils could not be included in the propensity score matching analysis as there is no quantitative way of identifying them, due to the subjective decision-making process for including this small proportion of pupils into the MCR Pathways programme.

The second stage of the PSM approach involves the use of a matching algorithm which links each 'intervention' individual with one or more people from the 'control' group. There are several different algorithms that can be used, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. In practice, the first decision should be whether to implement a one-to-one matching (where a single individual in the intervention group is matched to a single individual in the comparison group) or a many-to-one matching (where a single individual in the intervention group is matched to multiple individuals in the control group). Based on the expected sample sizes and observed distribution of propensity scores, a many-to-one matching approach was most appropriate for our purposes.

A major drawback of implementing a one-to-one matching is that it does not use all the available information, as only the closest matches can be used. Matching one-to-one can be done with or without replacement. Matching with replacement means that an individual from the comparison group can be matched more than once (to multiple people in the intervention group) provided the propensity scores are proximal, whilst an observation can only be used once if matching is done without replacement. In practice, even with replacement, implementing a one-to-one matching is often not desirable because it does not utilise all the available information that could be used in a many-to-one match.

There are several many-to-one matching algorithms, with 'Kernel' and 'Calliper' matching being amongst the most common. The Kernel matching algorithm matches every observation in the control group to each of the intervention observations and weights them based upon their distance from the propensity score (so that more similar observations are given greater emphasis in the estimation of impacts). Whilst it utilises all the available information, the weighting procedure is highly computationally

demanding and furthermore it is unclear how robust confidence intervals can be calculated under this procedure.[14]

The Calliper match, in contrast, matches each intervention observation with all the observations in the comparison whose propensity scores are within a certain distance. This distance is determined by the size of the calliper. One disadvantage of the Calliper matching is that it is difficult to know in advance what an appropriate calliper size should be. Therefore, the selection of the calliper is often an iterative process.

For the PSM to be robust, two conditions must be satisfied: common support and covariate balancing. To establish common support, the distribution of the propensity scores of the control group must overlap that of the intervention group, with no part of the distribution unsupported by observations from the control group. In practice, common support is usually identified using visualisations of the propensity score distributions. This approach is taken for this evaluation, with boxplots of the distribution of propensity scores presented later in this appendix, for each matching.

The second condition, covariate balancing, is necessary to deal with the selection bias problem. If the propensity score matching fails to balance covariates thought to be predictive of intervention selection, then it will fail to deal with the selection bias issue, invalidating the results. The results of covariate balancing tests will also be presented in the appendices for each of the matches implemented.

The impact analysis using PSM is evaluated on an 'Average Intervention on the Intervention' basis, including both those who enrolled on the programme and stayed the course and those who enrolled on the programme but later dropped out.

Generating the propensity scores

The 'Propensity Score' is the statistical probability that a pupil would take part in the programme based on their characteristics (on which data is available). Given a pupil's known characteristics, such as gender and receipt of free school meals, how likely is it that they would participate in the programme? The propensity scores are created to predict participation, based on a selection of factors thought to be predictive of participating in the programme and the outcomes themselves.

Ideally, all factors that affect participation would be included. However, data limitations mean that only the following factors could be included: gender, ethnicity, English as an Additional Language (EAL), Free School Meal receipt (FSM), Additional Support Needs (ASN) and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

The 'greater need phase in' design of the MCR Pathways rollout also presents a significant challenge. Ideally, the propensity score model would include school level characteristics, such as the proportion of pupils within the school that receive at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification. Indicators around school performance and composition could feasibly inform the model about the outcomes of interest. However, the targeting of the most in need schools first makes it highly unlikely that covariate

[14] Whilst bootstrapping is commonly used to estimate confidence intervals of Kernel matches, the robustness of bootstrapped confidence intervals is contentious.

balancing can be achieved if these factors are included in the model. Consequently, the analysis presents a matching conducted purely with individual level characteristics.

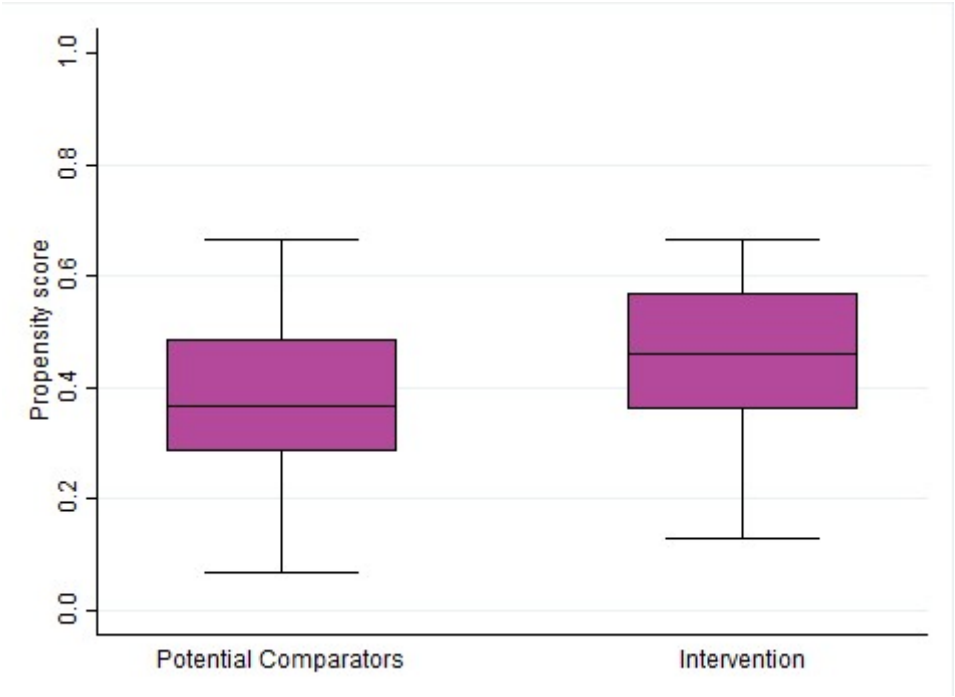
This approach is justifiable, as the intervention allocation is at individual levels (i.e. at the pupil level) and in this regard matching at the individual level is mimicking random assignment, and the population of interest is a small sub-sample of the whole school population. However, in an ideal scenario, one would control for both individual and school level information.

The final propensity score model included data indicating which academic year the pupil achieved the outcome and the following characteristics: gender, whether the pupil was known to be in receipt of free school meals, whether the pupil was known to have additional support needs, whether the pupil was known to speak English as an Additional Language, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation of the pupil's home address and whether the individual is a member of a minority ethnicity.

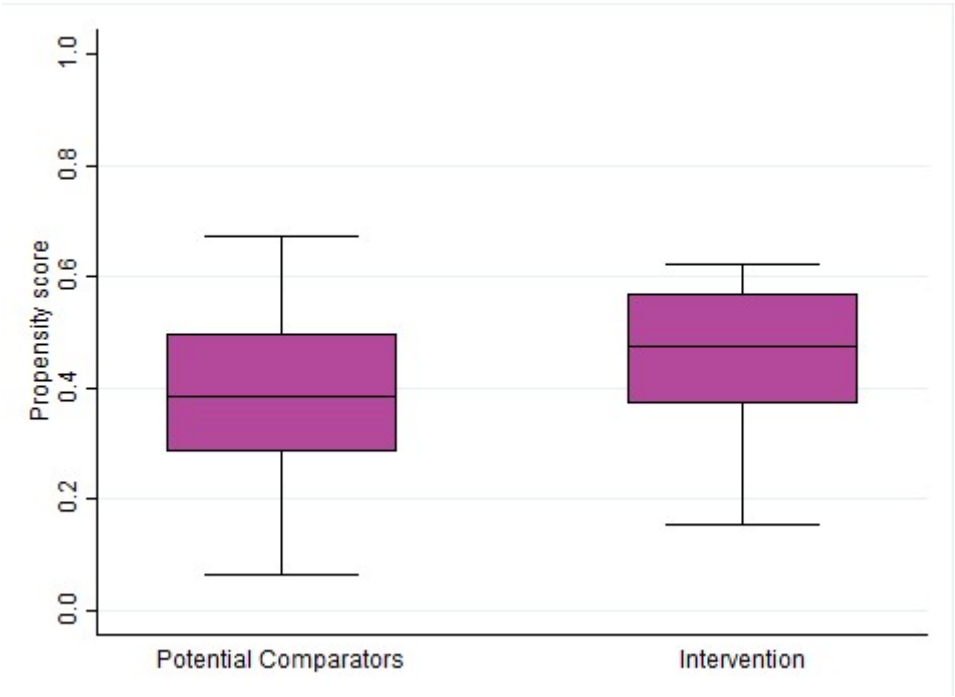
Assessing common support

One of the key underlying assumptions for robust PSM analysis is the existence of 'common support'. Common support exists if everyone in the 'intervention' group has at least one individual in the 'potential comparator' group that is sufficiently similar (i.e. their propensity scores have similar values). There are many ways that common support can be assessed, but one of the most common methods is by visually assessing the distribution of scores. Propensity scores were created for the three outcomes - remaining in school beyond age 16, having at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification and achieving a positive destination after leaving school. The associated propensity score distributions are presented below.

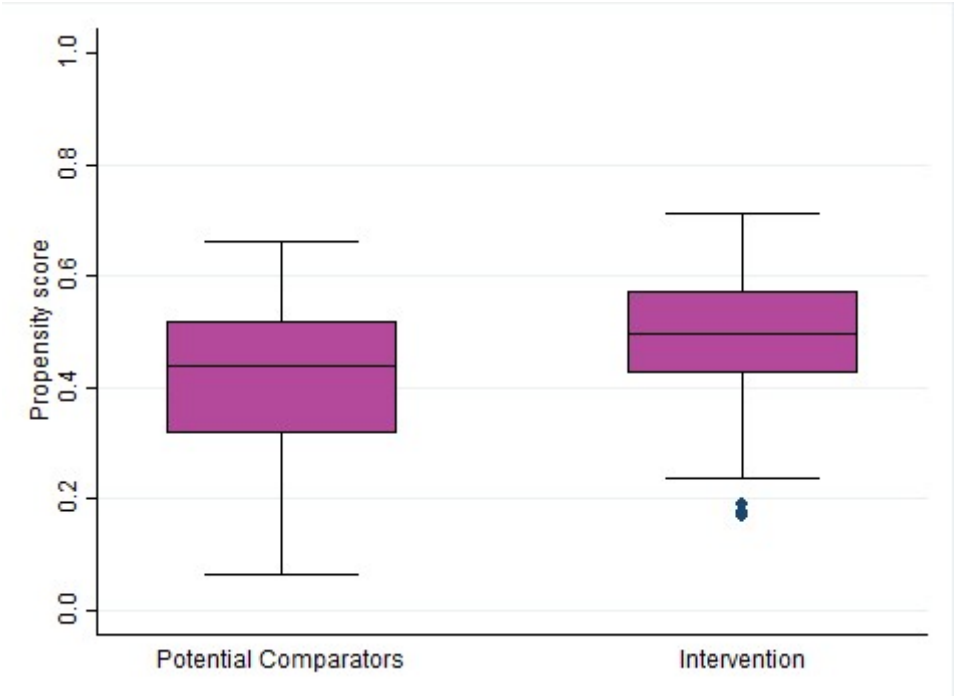
Appendix figure A:1 Propensity Score Distribution : Retention



Appendix figure A:2 Propensity Score Distribution : Attainment



Appendix figure A:3 Propensity Score Distribution : Destinations



The graphs indicate the overall there is common support for retention and attainment. The entire intervention group's propensity scores lie within the distribution of the potential comparators for each outcome, indicating that there should be at least one possible match for each individual in the intervention group. However, the propensity score distribution for destinations show that the intervention group has some individuals whose propensity scores are greater than the maximum observed in the potential comparator group and this may result in some observations not being on common support.

Matching participants with non-participants

The next step is to use the propensity scores to match participants with non-participants. There are several algorithms that can be used to implement PSM. For this analysis, we opt for a Calliper matching. Calliper matching takes an 'intervention' individual and matches them to all cases with similar propensity scores. How similar the propensity scores must be is decided by the size of the calliper. It is difficult to know beforehand what an appropriate calliper might be. Based on the interim analysis, the calliper size was set at 0.01, though the destinations calliper was later revised to 0.06 as the propensity score was more dispersed for this outcome.

To assess the quality of the matching, tests for covariate balance were performed. For all three analyses, no statistically significant bias remains on observed characteristics after the matching is conducted. There are no percentage biases of greater than ten percent and very few with bias of greater than five percent, indicating that the covariates are balanced. None of the biases after matching are statistically significant.

Appendix table A:1 Covariate balancing test: Retention				
Covariate	**Unmatched mean**	**Matched mean**	**Bias after matching (%)**	**P-Value**
	[Intervention; control]			
Year	1.2;0.8	1.2;1.1	5.3	0.573
Gender	58.7; 52.7	58.7; 57.5	2.3	0.809
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	7.1; 11.6	7.1; 6.3	2.9	0.722
In receipt of Free School Meals	41.8; 36.7	41.8; 40.2	3.2	0.733
Additional Support Need (ASN)	67.1; 66.8	67.1; 65.7	3.0	0.749
SIMD Decile	2.0; 2.6	2.0; 2.0	2.6	0.743
White	92.9; 86.2	92.9; 95.5	-8.5	0.243

Appendix table A:2 Covariate balancing test: Attainment				
Covariate	**Unmatched mean**	**Matched mean**	**Bias after matching (%)**	**P-Value**
	[Intervention; control]			
Year	1.4; 1.1	1.4; 1.4	4.5	0.685
Gender	57.1; 56.5	57.1; 60.7	-7.3	0.518
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	9.6; 16.7	9.6; 7.6	5.9	0.535
In receipt of Free School Meals	31.4; 23.6	31.4; 32.4	-2.2	0.855
Additional Support Need (ASN)	64.1; 52.3	64.1; 62.0	4.3	0.699
SIMD Decile	2.0; 2.6	2.0; 2.0	3.7	0.713
White	91.7; 81.5	91.7; 93.3	-4.7	0.593

Appendix table A:3 Covariate balancing test: Destinations				
Covariate	**Unmatched mean**	**Matched mean**	**Bias after matching (%)**	**P-Value**
	[Intervention; control]			
Year	1.3;1.4	1.3;1.4	-3.2	0.775
Gender	56.4; 48.7	56.4; 58.1	-3.3	0.761
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	7.4; 13.7	7.4; 5.6	5.7	0.523
In receipt of Free School Meals	17.8; 20.3	17.8; 18.9	-2.9	0.792
Additional Support Need (ASN)	52.1; 40.1	52.1; 51.4	1.5	0.895
SIMD Decile	1.9; 2.5	1.9;1.9	-3.9	0.686
White	94.5; 84.3	94.5; 94.8	-0.9	0.912

Appendix B. Pupil and school level characteristics

Appendix table B.1 Pupil level characteristics of the 2015-16 sample		
	Proportion (%):	
	Mentored	***Potential Comparators***
Gender		
Male	53.2	45.9
Female	46.8	54.1
English as an Additional Language (EAL)		
Known to be EAL	7.8	10.7
Not known to be EAL	92.2	89.3
Ethnicity		
White	94.4	86.5
Non-White	5.6	13.5
Receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)		
Known to receive FSM**	27.3	19.1
Not known to receive FSM**	72.7	80.9
Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD Decile of the pupils' home address)		
1***	65.6	50.6
2	15.6	17.4
3***	3.9	9.5
4	7.1	7.3
Between 5 and 10**	2.4	15.3
Base sizes	*154*	*534*

Asterisks indicate the 'p-value' or level of statistical significance. ** indicates a p-value of less than 0.05 and *** indicates a p-value of less than 0.01.

Appendix table B.2 School level characteristics of the 2015-16 sample

School level proportions of pupils with…	***Number of schools:***		***Mean (%):***	
	Treated	***Potential Comparators***	***Treated***	***Potential Comparators***
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	9	28	10.6	15.7
Care-experienced young people	9	28	0.0	0.0
Previously care-experienced young people	9	28	0.0	0.0
At least Level 4 SCQF in English and Maths	9	28	76.4	81.7
At least 5 Level 4 SCQF qualifications	9	28	77.7	82.6
At least 1 Level 5 SCQF qualification	9	28	79.0	83.0
At least 3 Level 5 SCQF qualifications **	9	28	58.8	66.2
In receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)	9	28	35.8	30.2

Appendix table B.3 Individual level characteristics of the 2016-17 sample

	Proportion (%):	
	Mentored	***Potential Comparators***
Gender		
Male	39.4	45.2
Female	60.6	54.8
English as an Additional Language (EAL)		
Known to be EAL ***	6.4	13.4
Not known to be EAL ***	93.6	86.6
Ethnicity		
White	94.0	85.2
Non-White	6.0	14.8
Receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)		
Known to receive FSM	41.4	35.7
Not known to receive FSM	58.6	64.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD Decile of the pupils' home address)		
1 (most deprived) **	60.6	51.0
2	17.9	16.3
3	5.6	7.9
4	6.4	7.6
5 to 10 (least deprived) ***	9.6	17.2
Base sizes	*251*	*367*

Asterisks indicate the 'p-value' or level of statistical significance. ** indicates a p-value of less than 0.05 and *** indicates a p-value of less than 0.01.

Appendix table B.4 School level characteristics of the 2016-17 sample				
School level proportions of pupils with…	***Number of schools:***		***Mean (%):***	
	Treated	***Potential Comparators***	***Treated***	***Potential Comparators***
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	14	28	12.4	17.0
Care-experienced young people **	14	28	0.0	0.0
Previously care-experienced young people	14	28	0.0	0.0
At least Level 4 SCQF in English and Maths	14	28	84.5	85.7
At least 5 Level 4 SCQF qualifications	14	28	82.1	83.1
At least 1 Level 5 SCQF qualification	14	28	83.4	84.1
At least 3 Level 5 SCQF qualifications	14	28	62.7	66.7
In receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)	14	28	30.5	28.1

Appendix table B.5 Individual level characteristics of the 2017-18 sample		
	Proportion (%):	
	Mentored	***Potential Comparators***
Gender		
Male	51.2	45.3
Female	48.8	54.7
Ethnicity		
White	90.5	90.0
Non-White	9.5	10.0
English as an Additional Language (EAL)		
Known to be EAL	1.4	1.7
Not known to be EAL	98.6	98.3
Receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)		
Known to receive FSM	42.5	50.9
Not known to receive FSM	57.5	49.1
Additional Support Needs (ASN)		
Known to have ASN	69.6	67.6
Not known to have ASN	30.4	32.4
Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD Decile of the pupils' home address)		
1 (most deprived)	57.2	51.8
2	18.0	19.4
3	7.2	9.9
4	5.3	4.9
5 to 10 (least deprived)	12.3	14.0