

# CELCIS Education Forum February 2025



How mentoring and community engagement are raising aspirations and educational attainment for our children and young people in Scotland

**CELCIS Education Forum**

**Webinar recording** February 2025

## Breakout room discussion notes and question responses

### Breakout room questions and group responses

**Why do you think care experienced young people would benefit from this early intervention programme- how will it help them address the issues they face?**

- We know that care experienced children often struggle with attachment and coaching and role modelling can be really helpful for that
- This model might be key to having an impact on the silent child who is often overlooked and harder to reach
- It could help build trust and confidence
- The model has huge potential
- General reflection on the emotional impact of the project and the speakers

**What else should we be considering (i.e. trauma-informed approach / co-design by young people) to help in the planning/delivery/evaluation process?**

- Not all mentoring is the same, it would be helpful to clarify of the model, parameters and methods
- Lack of clarity on who the mentoring model is based on, older child to younger child or older child to adults
- What are the plans around beginnings and endings
- Beginnings and ending will likely have to be extended for care experienced children
- Doing mentoring poorly can be harmful to children, so what supports are around the young people
- Again care experienced young people are likely to need increased supports.
- Is this employability or mentoring, or some of each?
- Trauma informed approach is key, not only for our care experienced young people, but also for the children in the nursery setting and ensuring their wellbeing

- What supports or inputs are available to the parents/carers

## **Speaker responses to chat questions**

*Is there evidence of adverse outcomes from this approach?*

### **Response from Gavin Morgan:**

We have always found and can evidence how the programmes has a positive impact on both the teenagers and the children they mentor, however there are times where a teenager, who joins the programme realises it is not for them, or struggles to comply with basic (but important) agreements in the Nursery/Primary. This may result in them choosing to leave (support and training is given early on, to minimise this), or be asked to leave (if more serious, such as inappropriate behaviour). There is a group agreement, non-negotiables and safeguarding process we follow.

Because the programme is set within Nursery/Primary and we have two of our trained facilitators, alongside the school staff, the young people are always observed and supported and then this is followed up in the group debrief or 1-1. The important elements are that the young person is supported through this process (to understand the impact they are having, and that the school staff understand we work within their school values, parameters and good practise models. The Nursery/Primary Head Teacher briefs them, in the first session, before they go into the mentoring.

When a negative outcome happens, we generally find that the Guidance teams feedback is still a positive outcome , that the experience of not continuing or completing the programme has still been a positive development that pushes them forward in their life and we have seen it has helped them go onto college and have a better sense of what they do/don't want to do.

If someone leaves in the first few weeks we can recruit another young person to take their place. This is rare but can happen, generally because it is the young person's choice to commit to the programme in the first place (it is their buy-in/decision, rather than something that has been forced upon them).

### **Response from Diana Whitmore:**

By adverse outcomes, I assume you are meaning for the participating young people? As far as we know, as Gavin indicated, sometimes a young person may feel the programme is not for them and they choose to leave. Everything we do with young people, we remind them that it is their choice and they are free to leave at any time. When a young person does choose to leave, we aim for them to leave on a positive note - for example we will write a reference for that young person noting down what they were good at - it is important that their leaving is handled sensitivity as most likely, a repetition of a pattern. We will work with that individual to make their ending different for them. One of our main aims is to empower young people with the skill of self reflection and awareness of the choices they are making and the outcomes and consequences of those choices.

I also am happy to say that, over the years, we have not had a negative situation in the nurseries. We had an incident a few years ago where the nursery toilet was graffitied. Our facilitators brought this to the group and explored with them what might be going on inside someone who needed to do this - it led to a great learning experience for the young people who went on to tackle the graffiti. A positive psychology approach

is to reframe the negative into a developmental step forward. Another example I can give is that sometimes the small child being mentored does not respond to the young person and they want a new 'mentee'. We do not change mentees and our aim is for that young person to experience that they can build a relationship with that child, it takes time but the world doesn't fall apart. Our young people have mentored selective mute children and although hard going, stayed with it and eventually that child re-engaged socially.

*Is there a minimum age for a mentor? S3-S6 might be too late to engage some people?*

**Response from Gavin Morgan:**

We deliver this within schools at S3-S6 (or 16+) and we have also worked with S2 pupils and this can work (potentially needs to be a longer programme or 2 cohorts for a more immersive experience), as some may not be ready to take on this role and the wider programme/sessions, but it could be done with younger teenagers with adaptations to the programme content/support needs.

**Response from Diana Whitmore:**

Developmentally, a main task of adolescence is developing the capacity for self reflection and awareness of choices and the outcomes (consequences) of those choices. We orientate this around - is the young person getting what *they want in their life*. We have worked with S2 teens and found that they need to be coached to develop their 'psychological mindedness'. As Gavin said in his talk, Growing2gether is not aiming to change behaviour, but to support young people change their mind set and to learn to make positive choices in their lives. This change in consciousness leads to better behaviour.

Highland Council is tracking those who go through our programme for 'positive destination' and we have good outcomes here - not that we did that for them, but that we contributed to their choosing a positive destination. So yes, we can work with S2 and we are aware of their developmental needs.

*A questions about whether or what support / interaction there is with parents and carers*

**Response from Gavin Morgan:**

Parents/Carers are provided with the information and consent, and are encouraged to become curious about the programme and are invited to the end of programme celebration event.

Our facilitators often have conversations with the parents and the level of engagement varies between each group (from parents who are very unengaged to those interested and seeing a change in the young person's behaviour and aspirations and speak of how proud they are of them).

It's a great question, as we think parents could be even more engaged/involved (especially from a Holistic Family Wellbeing Approach and involving other agencies (e.g. family workers, advocacy workers) and it might also help them see a different perspective / insight into their teenagers through this unique mentoring environment. Likewise, we have found that Teachers who come for a visit are amazed at the difference they see in how the teenagers/pupils are, in the nursery, compared to at school (One Deputy Head teacher realised his own unconscious bias/stereotypes which helped him engage with these pupils in different ways, back at secondary school).

**Response from Diana Whitmore:**

I think Gavin has answered this question well. Our facilitators will engage with parents/carers if possible - they often contact the parents to tell them what a great job their child is doing mentoring (often much to the parents surprise). This is an area that we are keen to develop and our contact with parents increases with the Youth Social Actions projects.