HEA Widening Access, Student Retention and Success National Programmes Archive:

Summary of Mentoring Materials
Executive Summary:

This report is a summary of material collected by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in its Widening Access, Student Retention and Success National Programmes Archive. [www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/retention-and-success/widening-access-programmes-archive](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/retention-and-success/widening-access-programmes-archive)


The original source documents referred to below are available via the URL above or, for Sheffield University Staff, via a dedicated google site at: [https://sites.google.com/a/sheffield.ac.uk/wpreu-resourcedocs/](https://sites.google.com/a/sheffield.ac.uk/wpreu-resourcedocs/)

The document below is a summary of key points concerning student mentoring drawn from the available material. It offers definitions and clarifications on the purpose of mentoring and the roles that mentors can fulfil alongside an overview of the development of mentoring programmes across the sector. It presents examples and models for practitioners planning, structuring, and delivering mentoring activities. It also offers guidance on training and data-gathering requirements to establish how the above elements can be effectively delivered.

The overarching conclusion to be drawn from the synthesis of the evidence contained in this database is that mentoring works. The available evidence suggests that mentoring makes tangible impacts on the progression of students from all backgrounds into Higher Education (HE). It suggests that mentoring can also play an important role in integrating the aims of Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) with the ambitions of participating schools, colleges, and Further Education (FE) establishments. These conclusions must, however, be qualified by the recognition that the mentoring programmes run by HEI’s have taken a heterogeneous form. This makes drawing firm conclusions on best practice difficult. One size does not fit all. However, historically the most successful schemes appear to have put in place the following elements:
• A commitment to clearly defining an institutional policy for Widening Participation (WP) and Outreach.

• Mentoring programmes structured around clearly defined aims and objectives for the scheme as a whole and for each individual activity.

• Agreed contracts of delivery, responsibilities and duties between HEI’s and participating establishments.

• Clearly established lines and schedules of communication between scheme organizers, coordinators, deliverers and evaluators.

• Comprehensive programmes for the initial and ongoing training of Mentors, Student Ambassadors (SA’s), and Personal Ambassadors (PA’s).

• Consistently and accurately gathered datasets that measure the efficiency and success of the schemes in hand and provide data that facilitates the planning and delivery of future schemes.
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Thematic Colour Coding Key:
Organization/Delivery/Planning
Recruitment
Training
Evaluation
Defining the Mentor and Mentoring

The role of mentors and the mission of the mentoring programmes they help to deliver must be clearly defined in order to ensure that resources are allocated effectively. In general, mentoring can be viewed as an intervention process: the mentor offers the mentee appropriate guidance, support, and advice to help the mentee achieve their potential, overcome difficulties or challenges, gain new skills and understandings, or see themselves, the world, and their future pathway differently, empowering their lives going forward.¹

However, mentoring can also serve a more specific set of goals. Within an education, learning, and careers development environment, mentoring supports and encourages “people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.”²

Both roles overlap in the context of WP and Outreach activities. Mentoring and mentors can:

- Be used to target specific cohorts and candidates, offering guidance and support, and helping them to achieve their potential.
- Form a vital part of and conduit between an HEI’s WP and Outreach activities and its partner schools and colleges.
- Operate as part of undergraduate and postgraduate student support and services networks.

The information in the HEA archive suggests that operating and available at different points of intervention, mentors and mentoring programmes can fulfil the following three roles:

**Learning Support:**
This can be defined as mentoring which develops learning support strategies relevant to the needs of the scheme, participating institution and cohort. It develops from identifying the specific needs of the target group and assisting in developing specific areas of weakness (such as language or writing tasks).

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Social / Personal Support:
This can be defined as mentoring that engages mentees at a more personal level, providing them with a sense that others are interested, invested, and dedicated to their development, perhaps redressing past absences of these qualities in their lives. This approach can help mentees develop a sense of trust, remain open to positive learning outcomes and emotional experiences, and pass on social skills, model behaviours, while also introducing mentees to a wider range of social interactions and contexts.3

Academic Support:
This can be defined as mentoring that supports mentees in their studies by helping them to overcome the conceptual or mechanical obstacles that are preventing them from reaching their academic potential. It can address issues as diverse as time-management, confidence and motivation building; promotion of organisational skills (e.g. developing and maintaining filing systems, essay planning, prioritising workloads); signposting appropriate sources of support; supporting students in their transition into higher education (e.g. by helping them to develop skills such as proofreading their own work, reading and research techniques etc).

The common thread linking all three forms of mentoring are that in each a mentor helps others to identify obstacles, and evaluate possible solutions. In each, mentors tailor the strategies chosen, monitors the mentees progress and provide support. The literature suggests that mentoring programmes should therefore be organized with clear-cut and well-defined aims and objectives as a matter of best practice, whilst acknowledging that the mentoring role can cover a wide range circumstances within these contexts.

With this in mind, the evidence suggests that the following considerations should be addressed in planning, organizing, and delivering mentoring programmes:

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The reasons behind the formation of mentoring schemes and their mentor/mentee relationships will be different for each programme. The role a mentor undertakes and the aims of the mentoring programme that they operate in will therefore often require clarification to those who are to undertake the mentoring and to those who are to receive it.

As the aims and objectives of the scheme will affect why the relationships between mentor and mentee are being formed in the first place how that will affect and inform the interactions between the two parties should be a primary consideration in the planning and programming of mentoring schemes.

Mentoring requires that both parties are active in the process of the mentee working towards reaching their potential. For lasting permanent change to occur, mentors and mentees should form an effective partnership with the mentee showing an appropriate level of interest, investment, and commitment to achieving the goals of the programme. The mentor’s goal is to encourage the mentee to take control of their own future, empowering and enabling their ability to move forward positively. They are there to support, encourage, and advise, not to make all of the running.

All mentors should undergo age-appropriate checks and vetting before training.

All mentors should undergo appropriate initial training, preferably with top-up or continuous training options on hand (see ‘Mentor Recruitment and Training’).
Mentoring Across the Sector

The development of mentoring within the HEI sector of the last two decades can be considered in the context of the progression from the Dearing Report to Aimhigher. This history reflects the development of self-started HEI mentoring schemes that eventually give way to or are folded into schemes driven by changes in policy and/or the introduction of Government mandated programmes such as Aimhigher.\(^4\) Aimhigher’s objectives were clearly defined:

1) To raise the awareness and aspiration to progress to HE among learners from underrepresented groups.
2) To raise the attainments of these groups so that they could gain the academic or vocational qualifications that would enable them to progress to HE.
3) To facilitate the progression of learners into HE via vocational pathways and courses.
4) To offer pertinent information, advice, and guidance (IAG), and support to potential students, their teachers, and families.

Aimhigher offered a funding and policy shape to HEI WP and mentoring schemes.\(^5\) The evidence contained in the HEA archive suggests that mentoring should not solely focus solely on enabling disadvantaged pre-HE students to the exclusion of other groups, however. As a matter of best WP practice, IAG regarding HE pathways should be made available to all. While the Aimhigher-type model can be adapted to guide pre-HE mentees of all backgrounds into appropriate HE pathways, mentors have also been consistently shown to play an important role in student transition into HE and retention. Therefore, the evidence advocating an integrated approach is compelling.

**Case Study: Nottingham Aimhigher:**

For example, the case study of Nottinghamshire’s 2009 Aimhigher report argued that as the awareness of and transitioning to HE starts at an increasingly young age so too must the sowing of necessary seeds to help prevent early disengagement.\(^6\) Nottinghamshire’s\(^6\) account of the introduction of the University of Greenwich’s Student Ambassador (SA) scheme is illustrative. Greenwich’s SA scheme was introduced in 2000 to assist in campus tours and university open days. Reflecting national trends, the scheme dramatically increased in size and scope, placing SA’s at the heart of delivering WP activities on behalf of the institution while ultimately integrating with Aspire, South East London’s Aimhigher platform. By March 2006, this meant that approximately 400 SA’s were operating across Aspire’s catchment area in institutions of higher and further education. (See ‘Evidence Base Report 11 - Being a Student Ambassador and Employability in South East London’ and ‘Evidence Base Report 20 - A Guide to Student Ambassador Schemes (University of Greenwich Models of Suggested Practice), and ‘Evidence Base Report 19 - Sir John Cass London Ambassador Scheme for Learners with Disabilities Evaluation Report’).\(^5\)

\(^4\) The University of Greenwich’s SA programme can be taken as an example of this. Greenwich’s SA scheme was introduced in 2000 to assist in campus tours and university open days. Reflecting national trends, the scheme dramatically increased in size and scope, placing SA’s at the heart of delivering WP activities on behalf of the institution while ultimately integrating with Aspire, South East London’s Aimhigher platform. By March 2006, this meant that approximately 400 SA’s were operating across Aspire’s catchment area in institutions of higher and further education. (See ‘Evidence Base Report 11 - Being a Student Ambassador and Employability in South East London’ and ‘Evidence Base Report 20 - A Guide to Student Ambassador Schemes (University of Greenwich Models of Suggested Practice), and ‘Evidence Base Report 19 - Sir John Cass London Ambassador Scheme for Learners with Disabilities Evaluation Report’).

\(^5\) From its inception in March 2003 to its conclusion in July 2011, £252,850,000 was invested in Aimhigher, including £21,000,000 in the Aimhigher Associates scheme.

\(^6\) Drawing on G. Wilson’s article ‘Boys – Talk to Them!’ (2007) Nottinghamshire’s 2009 Aimhigher report argued that as the awareness of and transitioning to HE starts at an increasingly young age so too must sowing the necessary seeds to help prevent early disengagement (Wilson, 2007).
report argues that potential mentees should be identified as early as possible in their school career and that WP and Outreach programmes which include mentoring should be established to increase awareness and aspiration earlier in school life. This latter facet is something the report suggests was lacking in contemporary programme planning.

**Case Study: Aspire Greenwich:**
In an HE context, Aspire’s Report on Mentoring Programming at the University of Greenwich (2009-2010) positions mentoring as a highly effective tool in supporting undergraduates, something capable of facilitating the transition of Pre-HE mentees into HE and also giving shape and purpose to the HE experience of undergraduates who choose to act as mentors. The report argued that a mentor’s potential impact is limited only by their timetable commitments, their own desire to work, and the funds available to employ them. Mentors and ambassadors, it proposes, should be given a wide remit and empowered to: help to guide parents and prospective candidates during open days; work in recruitment; plan and run events inside and outside their own institutions; work with underachieving children in schools and disaffected young people in the community; and assist with sporting activities, dance festivals, institutional profiling events, LEA events, UCAS days, and cultural visits. This includes the practice of ‘peer-mentoring’ which, the report suggests, works to counteract the issues around transition and retention that have accompanied rising student enrolments. In this context mentoring acts as a vital mechanism to support students, helping new students to ‘bed in’, acclimatise to student life, and come to terms with their new student identity.7

**Mentoring can open productive dialogues about Higher Education, and inform and guide as well as impart crucially relevant information at moments of significance for the mentee. Whether offered formally or informally, the easy to-and-fro that can be achieved in mentor/mentee relationships can help transmit information advice, and guidance in a way that more official media might not be able to achieve.**

Nottinghamshire’s report noted that the majority of its mentees had started on the programme in year nine, mostly via group sessions, before embarking on more intensive one-to-one interviews from year 10 onwards. (see AH Notts-Mentor_Partnership-Personal_Adviser, pp.18-19 and G. Wilson, ‘Boys - Talk To Them!', http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/boys-talk-to-them, (2007)).

7 See Evidence Base Report 16, 16a, 16b ‘Peer Mentoring Works’ (Aston University).
**Peer Mentoring**

The following offers a breakdown of different models of peer-mentoring, which can be adapted by the practitioner for their own purpose. Although the material below focuses primarily on peer-mentoring between HE students, its strategies can be adapted for use in pre-HE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type:</th>
<th>Cohort/Strategies of Engagement:</th>
<th>Pros and Cons:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pre-entry peer-mentoring | Generally offered via social network sites or e-mail  
Targeted or generic [all first years]  
Offered on an opt-in or opt-out basis. | Resource intensive in terms of organisation and administration  
Requires careful 'matching' in terms of cultural and, if appropriate, academic requirements |
| One-to-one peer-mentoring at transition | Generally offered to particular individuals or groups depending on individual and institutional needs and norms  
Usually offered on an opt-in basis | |
| One-to-group peer-mentoring at transition | Often known as 'Peer Guiding' this form of Peer Mentoring has the advantage of providing a 'friendly face' upon arrival, making transition positive for students (and in many cases their parents)  
Often offered on an 'opt-out' basis whereby all new students are allocated a mentor  
Institutional, School or Departmental  
Generally one mentor to four or five mentees (in some cases this is higher) | Can be ‘targeted’ depending on institutional and student needs  
Some matching may be possible |
| One-to-group transition + peer-mentoring | A synthesis of transition and longer term peer mentoring. This form of mentoring has the advantage of enhancing transition whilst then continuing to provide on-going support thereby helping deal with issues around retention.  
Offered on an opt-out basis as above | Allows for 'targeting' of specific groups if required. Social focus at the beginning but evolves into providing study skills support |
| **One-to-one longer term peer-mentoring** | Pastoral in nature this form of peer mentoring tends to be carefully managed. It can involve an element of informal peer counselling. | Resource intensive
Needs close allocation / supervision of student pairings
Student peer mentors may additional support
Usually involves students from a 'higher' year mentoring those in years below
Can be cross-university or school / subject focused
Relationships often last throughout the mentees university career and beyond. |
| **One-to-group longer term peer-mentoring** | Pastoral in nature this form of peer mentoring tends to be less formal than one-to-one longer term mentoring. Often School or subject focused. Usually put in place within [across] a year group | Less resource intensive than one-to-one peer mentoring
Mentors may need support with group dynamics |
| **'Partnership-led' peer-mentoring** | Two nominated ‘peer mentors’ lead a small group of between four and ten (possibly more) mentees. Can be long or short term. In some cases, it is appropriate to appoint two mentors for one mentee. | Can be offered on an inter or intra year basis
Offered on a long or short term basis
Particular useful at the point of transition into university
Particularly useful for international students who may require a mentor from their own country and a UK mentor. |
| **Group peer-mentoring** | A group of students specifically placed together with the purpose of mutual support. This form of mentoring relies on group cohesion and reciprocity. Generally School or subject focused. | Can be resource intensive as management of peer support groups may be problematic |
| Usually offered on a short term basis [one term or less] |
# Scheme Models

The following offers a breakdown of different schemes that have used mentoring to deliver their aims and objectives. Identifying scheme, coordinating bodies, and target cohort, the table notes the style of mentoring deployed, and the aims and length of the scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Who Was Involved</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Style of mentoring</th>
<th>Aims of Mentoring</th>
<th>Length of Scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aimhigher Associates (Mentor) scheme was part of the wider Aimhigher programme. Operating through 42 Area Partnerships nationwide (See relevant Evidence Base Reports, including Evidence Base Report 18 – Manual of Guidance).</td>
<td>Partnerships involved HEI’s, LEA’s, schools, academies, and colleges alongside local authorities, local health bodies, children’s services, Connexions, and other local providers and trainers.</td>
<td>(Year 9 – 13) The programme particularly focused on children in school from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC groups 4 – 8) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who lived in areas of relative deprivation.</td>
<td>A combination of one-to-one and group mentoring support, including signposting to other agencies, where appropriate. Used undergraduate role models with recent experience of entering university who provided positive perspectives on the benefits of HE. A proportion of the sessions were conducted on a one-to-one basis, either in face-to-face exchanges or through e-mentoring sessions, but there were also group work sessions.</td>
<td>Promoting progression of learners from communities under-represented in higher education (HE). To provide, through mentoring, support and encouragement to learners as they encounter the various transition milestones between Year 9 and Year 13. To help improve their educational performance. Increase understanding of the opportunities opened up by higher education. Opportunities to sample a range of other activities pertaining to HE and FE.</td>
<td>Each associate was expected to work in a school, academy or college with around four to six learners and provide from 15 to 20 exchanges in the course of an academic year (see Timeline For A Year-Long Schools-based Mentoring Programme).</td>
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<td>The National Arts Learning Network (NALN), funded by the Lifelong Learning Network (LLN), under Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (See Evidence Base Report 14)</td>
<td>The National Arts Learning Network, Arts University College, Bournemouth, local education providers, employers, sector skills council.</td>
<td>Year 9 - 13. The programme focused on students at foundation and school level who course leaders felt had Arts interests and the potential to progress but who seemed to lack direction and ambition. While disadvantaged students were a priority, the scheme was ultimately open to all.</td>
<td>Mentors were drawn from the BA Hons and Foundation Degrees programmes of the School of Media, School of Design, and the School of Art. Mentors and Mentees were allocated to one another based on the results of a personal interest questionnaire, with an effort made to pair similar subject and hobby interests.</td>
<td>Support in completing a UCAS application (if in Year 12 or 13). Focusing on students with leanings towards the Arts who may not otherwise progress to post-16 education and thence to HE, NALN’s pilot saw 10 undergraduates mentor 25 National Diploma Students at University College, and 20 pupils at a local link school. 12 weeks mentoring, beginning in January.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sir John Cass’s Foundation (SJCF) for London Ambassador Scheme (LAS) for Learners with Disabilities (see Evidence Base Report 19).</td>
<td>Pathfinder scheme and activities situated within the Learner Progression Framework (LPF). Beginning in six educational institutions in nursery.</td>
<td>Students with disabilities progressing to post-16 education and post-18 student progressing to HE and FE. Between 2006 – 2009 the project reached LAS-recruited undergraduates with disabilities to mentor students with similar disabilities in schools and colleges in the SJCF beneficial area.</td>
<td>The scheme aimed to: Identify the barriers students with disabilities encounter. Improve the retention of learners with disabilities at all levels of education.</td>
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primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education, SJCF LAS developed in collaboration with two projects:
Strand One: AchieveAbility National Network responding to National Aimhigher Project AchieveAbility for Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) and Strand Two: LETG ThisAbility for Learners with physical and sensory impairments and/or autistic spectrum conditions (ASC).

From both strands, 500 students and worked in 40 secondary schools and colleges based in inner London

| Increase learner/parent/teacher awareness of support structures available at HE level. |
| Increase awareness of and aspiration to HE pathways |
| Increase application rates to FE and HE. |
| Smooth transition from school to FE and HE. |

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8 The Labour Force Survey (2001-2002) found that disabled people were twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no qualifications, while only one in 20 disabled people were at FE or HE, compared with one in 10 of the rest of the population. The National Audit Office reported in January 2002 that disabled young people were 40 per cent as likely to go into HE at 18 as non-disabled 18-year-olds; while a survey carried out in December 2002 reported that 30 per cent of young disabled people who had not gone on to FE or HE said they were prevented from doing so for a reason related to their disability. In April 2008, the National Statistician’s Annual Article on Society reported that of 19 year olds in England and Wales with a disability or health problem were nearly three times as likely to be Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) as those without. Furthermore, disabled adults in the UK were more likely to have no qualifications (25%) than non-disabled adults (11%) and 50% of working age disabled people in the UK were in work in 2007 compared with 80% of non-disabled people.
| Contributions were made from 65 learners, 26 parents/guardians, 25 teaching staff. | Undergraduate | Peer-mentoring | To help student transition and retention from pre-HE to HE. Pastoral/Transitional/Learning/Academic Improve participants’ knowledge of further and higher educational pathways, align their aspirations to pathways, improve knowledge of the HE application process, and HE life, to develop progression plans to facilitate client aspiration, and to increase confidence and self-esteem. | Another type of peer mentoring, longer-term pastoral mentoring is successful because it offers on-going, long-term support to those students who need it. Both transitional and pastoral peer mentoring provide a valuable ‘safety-net’ for students making those first few tenuous steps into university life. |

Aston University (See Evidence Base Report 16 a-c) |
**Organizing Schemes**

This timeline is drawn from the Aimhigher National Training Standard document for mentoring programmes involving schools. This model could be adapted to inform the organisation of other programmes.9

Designed to run for a maximum of 12-15 weeks, the planning, organization, and evaluation of Aimhigher programmes was conceived of as a year-round process.

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**The literature suggests that running mentoring schemes successfully should be a continuous and ongoing process and that resources should be allocated and reviewed accordingly.**

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**Thematic Colour Coding Key:**
- Organization/Planning/Delivery/Communication
- Recruitment
- Training
- Evaluation

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Objectives</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin identifying mentors for following academic year</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>This should include mentors returning to university in the following academic year who would like to continue in the role, and beginning to advertise for new candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify HEI Scheme Coordinator</td>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement by Head/Principal of participating school to join scheme and accept in writing the commitments involved in and aims and objectives of the scheme to the HEI coordinator</td>
<td>No later than end of June</td>
<td>Aimhigher reports consistently note that clearly defined channels and schedules of communication between HEI’s, participating schools, and all involved were necessary. These should be formally put in place rather than trust to personal initiative and relationships to minimise problems. Approaches should also be coordinated to ensure maximum scheme impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform/gain support of those involved in delivering the proposed scheme at HEI and/or participant level</td>
<td>June/July</td>
<td>Get feedback on proposed schedule of scheme/ objectives of activities/check for timetable problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree proposed working partnership and service level</td>
<td>No later than end of July</td>
<td>Clearly defined and agreed aims and objectives between participants are key to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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9 See Evidence Base Report 22 – 22g – ‘National Training Standards’ document.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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| Confirm in writing                                                  |                     | the successful implementation and delivery of schemes.  
| **Training** for coordinators                                       | First/second week in September | Clarify and agree scheme aims and objectives in writing. Break these down to show which activities will deliver which objectives.  
| Identify potential mentees                                           | September           | Overall, the evidence suggests that the better the initial training for those involved in schemes at all levels, alongside a provision for continuous training, the more likely it is that the scheme will hit the ground running and be a success (see Mentor Preparation and Training, pp.x-y).  
| Inform/gain support and administrative staff at school and university | September           |  
| Agree appropriate times and venues for scheme deliveries with participating schools | September           |  
| Confirm in writing                                                  | September           |  
| Inform all school staff whose lessons may be affected               | September           | Mentees end up missing too much work if sessions are run at the same time each week and efforts should be made to avoid targeting the same subjects over the length of the scheme. This was identified as a problem in long-running Aimhigher schemes, leading to friction between HEI and school coordinators.  
| Identify potential candidates                                        | September           | Gather and evaluate relevant data  
| Engage potential candidates                                          | September           | Gather and evaluate relevant data  
| Gain parental permission                                             | September           |  
| Obtain learner profiles                                              | No later than end of September | Gather and evaluate relevant data  
| Obtain baseline data                                                 | No later than end of September | Gather and evaluate relevant data  
| **Training** for Mentors                                             | September/October    | See Mentor Preparation and Training pp.  
| Hold launch meeting with principal coordinators                      | No later than end of October | Address and reconcile any final issues  
| Prepare documents for introduction of mentor to school (curriculum arrangements, EO statement, inclusion statement, pastoral system) | No later than end of October | Copies should be circulated and acknowledged as received and read by principal coordinators.  
| Introduce mentors to school and cohort                               | No later than end of October |  


**TRY AND ARRANGE AT LEAST FOUR SESSIONS BEFORE CHRISTMAS BREAK**

| Scheme reviews | Throughout sessions |
| Update monitoring information | Throughout sessions |
| Provide data for evaluation purposes | Continuously throughout sessions |
| Evaluate success of scheme | At its conclusion – to be reviewed again at the end of the academic year with lessons learned brought forward into planning the next round of schemes and activities. |

**Points of Interest for Coordinating and Delivering Practitioners:**

The literature suggests that the following should also be considered in planning and delivering schemes and activities:

- **Many** of the reports gathered in the HEA evidence base emphasize how poor planning, organization, and communication resulted in poor delivery (for example, Kent and Medway (Evidence Base Report). The most successful schemes were the best planned, organized and communicated (for example, (Nottingham/Greenwich/Aston).

- **Where** possible, schemes and activities should be coordinated with the schools curricular programme. For example, where subject specific campus visits or ‘taster’ sessions take place, an attempt should be made to make the activities of the day relevant to the point in the subject’s curriculum the cohort has reached. Similarly, if the activity is designed to raise a particular point regarding HE (the application process, for example), it should be delivered leaving enough time for the cohort to absorb the information given, raise any questions regarding it, and use it productively.

- **This** can only be achieved by close liaison between the principal coordinators and deliverers. The evidence stresses that no matter how
inclusive and empowering the top-down vision, delivery and results will suffer unless all participants are brought into agreement and on the same page during the planning and organization stages. Shortfalls in these areas have a knock-on effect on the success of a scheme that is rarely made up for by enthusiastic delivery.

Time spent in planning and coordination before, during, and after delivery is of equal if not greater importance to the activities themselves.
Mentor Recruitment and Training

The Aimhigher National Training Standard (Evidence Base Report 22 – 22g) suggests that mentors should be drawn from the same backgrounds as those targeted by the WP initiative. However, research also suggests that a recruitment process that prescriptively searches for a definitive ‘type’ of mentor could limit the pool of applicants. For example, ‘The Role of Student Ambassadors (SAs) in HE: an Uneasy Association Between Autonomy and Accountability’ (2010) argues that while many job specifications for mentors and SA’s describe a certain type of personality, the image of the ideal student ambassador is a myth. This suggests that the reality of recruitment is more complex, and that defining a specific type of recruit can exclude people who might otherwise have a lot to offer, but who do not ‘see’ themselves in the advertised job specification.10

The diverse nature of mentees requires an equally diverse range of mentors. Mentor recruitment should recognize that flexibility is required to create successful mentor and mentee pairings and draw from the entire body of students at each HEI.

The Aimhigher material suggests that using an application form for short-listing followed by an interview, the recruitment process should assess potential mentors based on the following criteria, which can then be used to facilitate the pairing process where the scheme requires it.

Criteria for Shortlisting Process:

- Quality of the written application, particularly the personal statement.
- Citing of previous experience with other appropriate project/activities, e.g. scouts or guides (in a leadership capacity), coaching in sport, music, drama, Duke of Edinburgh awards, or other WP, community, or social activities.
- Previous background in or experience of WP.
- Candidate meets specialist subject, gender, or ethnicity-related targets.
- Availability:

  THIS IS CRUCIAL. The candidate must be able to attend training and be available for the duration of the programme.

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10 See Evidence Base Report 7 – ‘The Role of Student Ambassadors (SAs) in HE’.
• Capacity to proceed through the CRB process.

**Criteria for Interview Stage:**

In discussion, the candidate must be able to:

• Outline their previous experiences in working with young people, and bring to bear insights suggesting their capacity to perform well within the scheme.

• Satisfy the panel that they can manage both the project and their academic workload.

• Demonstrate the interpersonal skills that suggest that they could effectively undertake the role both on a one-to-one and a group basis.

• Satisfy you that they could undertake the role with confidence, understanding and resourcefulness.

There should be evidence that the candidate:

• Has sufficient understanding of the education system in England to help and support the learner in their transition process.

• Knows about WP and is sympathetic to the aims of scheme.

• Confirms their availability for and commitment to attending the training dates.

• Demonstrates that they will commit to the duration of the scheme.

To prevent delays and ensure their suitability to attend mentor training, where necessary candidates should complete CRB checks immediately following their interview. HEI’s should not wait until interviews for the whole intake are completed to begin this process.

**Suggested Questions for Interview:**

• What experience have you had of working with young people?

• How does it have a bearing on your suitability for this project?
• What barriers or challenges can you identify which may prevent young people from applying to and accepting a place in HE?

• What would you do . . . ? (Give a scenario relevant to your scheme. For example: ‘How would you encourage the participation of a quiet member of your group?’)

• How will you balance your academic commitments with your commitment to this project and any other commitments outside of your studies?

• Does your university timetabling schedule allow you to undertake a commitment to this project during normal school hours?

**Delivering Core Competencies in the Training Programme:**

The training of mentors should address the four categories core competencies required for them to carry out their role effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding the aims and objectives of the programme, and the requirements of the HEI, schools, and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding the ethical and procedural framework in which mentors and the mentoring programme operates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing the emotional intelligence to successfully deliver key practical skills (for example, one-to-one and group exchanges).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planning, management, and evaluation of exchanges.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is essential that it is made clear that attendance of the entire training programme is necessary in order to progress to the delivery of the scheme.

Where possible, the training should be interactive in nature. The majority of the exchanges should involve tasks and activities to be undertaken by the prospective mentor to develop the appropriate knowledge and skills that will allow them to successfully deliver the scheme. Only a small proportion of the time involved should be spent briefing on factual information pertaining to the scheme.
The training period should end with all candidates undertaking an assessment exercise to check the extent to which prospective mentors have developed and demonstrated the core competencies required for the role.\(^\text{11}\)

**Follow-up CPD training:**
Where possible, a provision must be made for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and it should be offered as and when appropriate. Its key functions are to:

- Extend the mentor's repertoire of skills.
- Review the mentor's experience to date and offer guidance for future sessions.
- Offer training to deal with any issues that the mentor has identified.

**Trainers:**

All training should be conducted by experienced trainers of a high standard, who are fully conversant in the aims and objectives of the scheme. It should take place in an appropriate venue and with good provisions for the duration of the training. Its organization and delivery must reflect the standard expected of mentors in fulfilling their role.

- There should be a team of experienced trainers with numbers dependent on the size of the group. A minimum ratio of 1 trainer to 12 participants will allow for observation during group work sessions which is an essential part of the training and assessment process.
- The training team should have a facilitation plan which sets out who will do what and when during the course of the training, with a lead trainer to manage the training process and the team.
- The trainers should use the same one-to-one and group work approaches and facilitation skills that are required to be delivered by the mentors.
- Interactivity is key. Passive briefings do not practice the skills essential to delivering the scheme.

\(^{11}\) For examples of these competencies and guidelines for mentors including appropriate behaviours, session structuring, etc, see Hereford, Worcestershire, and Shropshire Mentoring Guidance which is available from the WPREU Resources google site.
Where applicable and possible, the school/college coordinator should be invited to observe the training.\textsuperscript{12}

**Mentor Preparation:**
As the timeline suggests above, the literature suggests that, where possible, recruitment should occur in term 3 and training in the following term 1. This will prepare mentors in time for their integration into the prepared schemes for the year (see **Timeline for a Year-Long Schools-Based Mentoring Programme**).

The recruitment and training of next year’s mentors from the current year’s mentees’ institutions can help the mentoring programme become continuous and self-sustaining. Each mentor should be offered ongoing CPD following their initial training, and be allocated a member of WP staff as a mentor throughout the year.

**Relationship Management:**
Matching students on a large scale is difficult, yet it is important to take account of certain cultural or other requirements when matching mentor to mentees. Mentees need to be asked if they have any preference in terms of gender, ethnicity, home-country, and religion. Mentors should be more flexible, although efforts should also be made to promote flexibility. Where Aimhigher advocated matching similar backgrounds, if a prospective mentor indicates that they would prefer to be/not to be matched with individuals from a different/the same gender or religious background this should be taken into account.

The need for the mentoring relationship to be confidential in nature needs to be stressed to both parties. Mentor training should discuss ethics and confidentiality in some depth. It may be advisable for students to sign an ‘agreement of understanding’ that covers confidentiality and other issues relevant to individuals.

**Reward and Recognition:**
Mentoring should always be a voluntary activity for both mentors and mentees. The contribution to mentoring made by mentors can be recognised in a variety of ways including: formal accreditation of activities – as part of an ‘employability module’ or

\textsuperscript{12} See Evidence Base Report 23a – Aimhigher National Training Standard, and Hereford, Worcestershire, and Shropshire Mentoring Guidance (Activity Resource Folder).
university certificate: the awarding of certificates of participation outlining skills gained and activities undertaken: and, celebration events which may include awards for mentors nominated by their mentees.

While it has been argued that having worked as a mentor many mentors go on to use their experiences in employment, it has also been suggested that the impact of this has been over-stressed in the existing literature, and that this is not in fact the case.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Mentoring Focus:}
The opening of a long-term mentoring programme should be geared on ‘settling in’ mentors and mentees. This should transition into a focus on the designated key aims and objectives of the scheme. Mentoring training needs to encapsulate both social and academic issues with mentors being made aware of the boundaries placed upon them in their role.\textsuperscript{14}


https://sites.google.com/a/sheffield.ac.uk/wpreu-resourcedocs/

\textsuperscript{13} See Evidence Base Report 11 – ‘Being a Student Ambassador and Employability in South East London’ (Chilosì, Broadhead, Noble, Wilkinson).

\textsuperscript{14} Aston University Report – Key Elements for the Creation of Successful Mentoring Programmes:
Evidence and Evaluation

The evidence suggests that one of the most problematic issues concerning mentoring schemes and activities lies in the processes used to gather data, and the way that the gathered data is used to inform and support conclusions on schemes and activities.

Data gathered from an activity is essential to effectively evaluate the efficiency with which the scheme has been delivered and to measure the degree to which it, and its constituent activities, have fulfilled the aims and objectives stated at the scheme’s outset.

Across the evidence base, the patchy and incomplete nature of data gathering has been consistently highlighted as an issue in scheme planning, delivery and evaluation. Where incomplete or poorly contextualised data sets are collected, questions can be raised regarding the accuracy of the conclusions drawn on a programme’s effectiveness. Accurate data sets thoroughly aligned to the aims and objectives of the scheme are key to consistently delivering successful schemes.

The evidence suggests that the method of harvesting, and the data gathered, must be a central consideration in the organization and delivery of mentoring schemes from the inception of scheme design.

The evidence base suggests that:

1) Designated or desired outcome should be nominated for each activity session within the scheme by the HEI and participating schools.
2) Activity records and data capture sheets, alongside mentee, mentor, and deliverer responses should be tailored to assess whether these outcomes were fulfilled.
3) Data assessing outcomes can then be compared between HEI’s and the schools. By referring back to the original mentoring framework agreements it can be seen where adjustments need to be made, and help to generate clearer overall scheme evaluations.

Based on the evidence base, the following conclusions on evaluation practice can be offered:

1) Draw as much high quality quantitative and qualitative scheme and activity relevant data as possible.
2) Store data in a manner that facilitates its use.

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15 For example, see Evidence Base Report 2’s and Evidence Base Report 3’s comments on the nature of South Yorkshire and Kent Medway’s data-gathering processes and its raising of questions about the stated conclusions on the effectiveness of their schemes.
3) Create an ongoing database so that trends and examples can be found over time via statistical analysis.

4) Use data to manage the planning, provision, and delivery of schemes at inception, during delivery, and during review.

5) Use the data to provide feedback to the following stakeholders: scheme planners/coordinators, mentors delivering the scheme, mentees (via schools liaisons), and (potentially) parents/guardians, and admissions officers.
Conclusions

Final recommendations drawn from the literature in the HEA archive can be offered to the different stakeholder groups who are involved in planning, organizing, and delivering mentor schemes:

a) HEI Managers
b) Staff responsible for development and delivery of mentoring programmes.
c) Students as mentors and mentees

Recommendations for executives and management in HEI’s:

- Embed mentoring as part of the institution's core mission, focused through the HEI's WP and Outreach Strategies.
- Appoint a dedicated person, or persons, to manage and administer the programme.
- Consider academic credit/recognition for mentors who are also students at the institution.
- Encourage schools and departments to appoint a person to work with the centrally appointed 'mentoring department' or 'officer'.

Recommendations for staff responsible for development and delivery of mentoring programmes:

- Design a robust and well-managed programme.
- Ensure effective marketing of the programme.
- Introduce a rigorous mentor selection process.
- Begin recruitment as early as possible for the following academic year.
- Match mentees and mentors within ‘subject / discipline’ areas to ensure that both social and academic needs can be covered.
- Where necessary, consider matching mentees and mentors taking into account demographic or other criterion as necessary (particularly relevant in targeted mentoring).
- Institute high quality training for mentors.
- Engage with staff across the institution right from the onset – and continue doing so.
- Provide on-going support to peer mentors and mentees throughout the year.
- Introduce a level of flexibility into the programme so that, if necessary, mentees can ‘swap’ mentors should they wish to.
- Evaluate the programme at an appropriate point or points in the year.
- Listen to, and act upon, student feedback.
- Introduce formal 'recognition' of peer mentors efforts [a certificate of achievement / participation.
- Consider introducing 'celebratory' events

Recommendations for students as mentors and mentees:

- When initially selecting which HEI to attend, take note of those which institutions offer peer-mentoring as such programmes take away much of the anxiety associated with making the transition to university.
- Where mentoring is offered as a programme, make the most of the opportunity: even if as a new students you feel that you do not need a peer mentor, if one is offered to you – make contact. It could lead to an enriching friendship. If the opportunity arises consider volunteering to become a mentor.
- If the University does not offer mentoring, contact your School or Department and ask them to consider developing a programme. If all else fails, ask the Students Union to raise the issue with the university management – or indeed, to establish a programme within the Union itself.