

NEON Working Group

Mentoring to Widen Access

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Contents: Good working practice in mentoring evaluation

- Brightside – who we are and what we do
- Challenges and good working practice in mentoring evaluation
- How we capture our impact – the Brightside approach and case study
- Final tips on good working practice for mentoring evaluation in access

Brightside: 18 Years of Digital Outreach

- Specialising in online mentoring projects, working with **over 100,000 young people over the last 18 years.**
- We provide **digital mentoring** through an app and website, matching young people with mentors who may be university students, sector professionals, or outreach specialists.
- Overcoming barriers of geography to give young people the knowledge and connections they need to make **confident and informed decisions** about the future.
- Work with **diverse partners** across the education sector: universities, FE colleges, other charities, and corporate businesses.



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Working in partnership

- We work with over 70 partners to deliver our digital mentoring programmes. We also develop our own national programmes, working with target learners across the country.
- Some partners design their own programmes, identifying young people they'd like to support, and we support in delivery.
- Example programme models:
 - **HE Apply** – A STEM charity provides prospective applicants with mentors studying STEM at university to support them through the UCAS process.
 - **Sector Insight** – An employer provides their employees as mentors to give Year 10 students insight into working in their sector.
 - **Pre-arrival mentoring** – A university provides their student ambassadors as mentors to support offer-holders in their transition to post-18 study.



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Brightside: Our mentees

- Young people across England whom Brightside or our partners have identified as needing intervention. These are usually **disadvantaged young people facing an important decision about university or careers.**
 - Many are WP priority groups, such as young carers or refugees.
 - Some are ward learners for NCOPs.
 - For university partners, they may be prospective applicants or offer-holders.
 - Other mentees might be beneficiaries for another charity who are diversifying their intervention – we work with students as young as Year 6!



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Brightside: Our mentors

- **Volunteer Network of 4,000+ mentors**
- **Partner mentors**
- **Student ambassadors** – on HE-orientated projects
- **Sector professionals** - on work-focussed programmes
- **Social workers** – for vulnerable young people



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Capturing the impact of mentoring

Key challenges	Good working practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nuanced relationship with diverse and individualised impact. Attribution can be particularly challenging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Give participants the chance to articulate impact in their own words. Qualitative data is particularly important.Create specific opportunities for mentees to attribute change to the mentoring (or not!).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Challenging to understand what changes you want the mentoring to achieve; it's such a versatile tool this can be hard to identify clearly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify what changes you are hoping to see in mentees, and how the mentoring will deliver this.Gather pre- and post-intervention data to see distance travelled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mentees may enjoy the mentoring due to a good relationship with their mentor, but this may not have an impact on the outcomes you are hoping to see.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Separate out the data gathering which aims to capture impact and the data which captures quality/enjoyment of the relationship.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Impact can be long-term, with changes in mindset or decision-making becoming apparent years after the intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This is hard to capture; HEAT data can help. Alternatively, running repeat interventions or gathering data long after the intervention can support this.



How we capture our impact

- Ultimately, we want our mentees to leave a mentoring programme feeling able to make **confident and informed decisions** about their future.
- Our Theory of Change is based on an extensive review of evidence, consultation with mentoring experts, our own lessons from many years of delivery, and input from young people, their mentors and our partners. This posits that confident decision-making is underpinned by **six key mentee outcomes: hope, coping, self-efficacy, human capital, social capital and growth mindset.**
- In our impact measurement, we use **baseline and exit survey data** to identify **distance travelled** on these six outcomes, and ultimately confident decision-making. We also gather data on the **quality of the mentoring relationship** and **attribution** of decision-making to the mentoring programme.



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Data gathering

• Aim	• Data we gather
• To capture impact in terms of outcomes (hope, social capital, self-efficacy, etc).	• Questions from reputable social science questionnaires capturing each outcome – e.g. Phillips-Springer Self-Efficacy Scale. • Open-ended qualitative questions. • Ranking data of most likely post-16 or post-18 route – before and after intervention.
• To identify attribution .	• Attribution scale – <i>“To what extent is this decision due to the mentoring rather than other factors”</i> .
• To capture perceived quality of the programme.	• Likert-scale data on different aspects of the mentoring relationship. • Net Promoter Score.
• To identify project-specific outcomes.	• Specific questions for the project - e.g. we are liaising with King’s Centre for Military Health and Research to develop scales for a project with the SCiP Alliance which is targeting loneliness among young people from Armed Forces Families.



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Bright Carers

- A **collaborative programme** with **seven university and third sector partners** supporting **53 young carers** in navigating their post-16 and post-18 options.
 - *Impact:* **100% of mentees progressed** on at least one outcome. Human capital (knowledge about education and careers) increased by 26pp at the overall level.
 - *Attribution:* **82%** of mentees said that the **mentoring contributed to their decision** about their next steps.
 - *Quality:* **100% of mentees** reported that they got on with their mentor; overall NPS of 35 (good).
 - *Project-specific:* **36% of mentees** felt more confident they could access HE in the future, and there was a reduction in perceived barriers to HE.
 - *Qualitative feedback:* We identified that mentees wanted more content on student finance and money management in the mentoring materials.
- Our impact analysis mechanisms allowed us to capture this impact clearly, and to separate out intersecting elements of the project.



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Final tips on good working practice for mentoring evaluation

- Identify **clear areas for improvement** which you can capture in feedback data. For example: if you know that student finance is a big area for concern, include questions which capture mentees' progress in knowledge or confidence on student finance. Mentoring is not a catch-all; clearly defined aims are important for effective evaluation.
- Try to find **common ground** between impact analysis of your mentoring programme and other interventions. This allows you to assess your impact across all of your provision, and doesn't keep it siloed away as a separate intervention.
- **Value mentees' reported experiences**: mentoring is so personal that a dependence on quantitative data can be misleading. Opportunities for qualitative feedback are vital.
- Bear in mind **selection bias**; unobserved variables, such as motivation and parental support, can determine which mentees actively engage with mentoring. Try to gather feedback from less engaged students to find out why – they'll give you really insightful feedback!



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Breakout groups

- What do you think is **most important in capturing the impact** of mentoring programmes?
- What are the **key challenges** in capturing this impact?
- Where might mentoring make an **impact on access** where other interventions don't? And **where are other interventions more effective?**
- How do you **integrate your impact analysis** across your provision? How could you do that with a mentoring programme, and what would you need to consider?



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The Evaluation Framework

TARGET

Who is it for?

Disadvantaged young people facing an important decision about university or career

INTERVENTION

What is it?

Online mentoring
Personal mentor available to answer questions and support decision making in structured way at relevant time

Access to information
Students are directed to relevant resources

Access to networks
Ongoing post-programme support to alumni through peer support and role models

CHANGE MECHANISMS

Why does it work?

Builds self efficacy
Confidence in one's ability to achieve

Builds coping skills
Learning how to deal with setbacks

Teaches hope
Develops motivation to achieve

Builds growth mind-set
Ability can be improved

Develops human capital
Specific knowledge and skills.

Develops social capital
Access to networks

OUTCOMES

What difference does it make?

- Higher education entry rates for POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 mentees (74% & 78%) compared to the national average (16% & 23%)*
- 82% of Brightside mentees achieved five GCSEs at A* to C including English and Maths, compared with a national figure of 64.9% in 2015.
- After three years of transition mentoring at SOAS (2018), the end of first year continuation rate was 96%, compared with 88% before the project started (2015).



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