

Media Release

Friday 29 September

Roll out of MCR Pathways mentoring programme to all Glasgow Secondary Schools

Disadvantaged and care experienced young people in every Glasgow secondary school will now be able to benefit from the pioneering and highly successful mentoring and talent development programme developed over the last decade by MCR Pathways and Glasgow City Council.

Presently, more than 700 young people – across 15 secondary schools - are supported in their schools by MCR and mentors from all walks of life and all ages. Over the next 4 months the programme will roll-out to all 30 city secondaries.

Powerful statistics recently published in the Impact Report revealed that more secondary pupils than ever before are achieving better results in literacy and numeracy and staying on rates in this group of young people is at an all-time high.

These statistics are reversing decades of poor national outcomes for young people in the care system, record numbers of Glasgow's young people are progressing directly to college, university and employment. Where it was 48.8% previously, for mentored young people it is now 81%

Councillor Chris Cunningham, City Convener for Education, Skills & Early Years is delighted with the expansion into all secondary schools and said today: "The partnership between MCR Pathways and the council over the last 10 years has had an incredible impact on the lives of the young people who've been mentored or been a part of the talent tasters.

"The fact that we can now take this successful model into the rest of our secondary schools and make a difference in the lives of every young person in need is great news for all involved – the schools and of course the young people.

"However, it does mean that our efforts to attract mentors to the programme is now crucial so as to meet the demand that we have identified across the city."

Relationship mentoring in Glasgow schools is undoubtedly closing the attainment gap in the city and helping some of our most vulnerable pupils.

As Iain MacRitchie, Founder of MCR Pathways, explains: "People make Glasgow and from every walk of life. This year's People Make Glasgow Inspiring City Award for MCR was based on the fantastic variety of mentors we have of all ages, professions, jobs and backgrounds. They all share the commitment to help a disadvantaged young person to find, grow and use their talent. We want to share the simple fact that mentoring relationships can have a profound impact on everyone involved. Anyone really can make and will themselves experience a life changing difference. "

In January this year, Glasgow City Council also announced an ambitious target - to engage up to 10% of council employees as mentors or as part of the talent taster programme.

Annemarie O'Donnell, Glasgow City Council Chief Executive, who announced the target, said today: "The response from council staff to our mentor and talent taster appeal has been incredible. I was never in any doubt that a variety of staff from departments and services across the city would rise to the challenge and find out more information about how they can help this important project.

“Our staff will help shape and influence the lives of many young people across the city over the next few years and I respect them all for volunteering.

“However, now that we are expanding in to an additional 15 schools we need to encourage more and more people of all ages and all walks of life to get involved.”

As Iain MacRitchie concludes: “When one mentors, two lives are changed. I have learned so much from my mentee and in awe of her resilience and determination given the challenges she has faced. Organisations are also benefitting hugely with staff skills being enriched and developed in profound ways. People really do make Glasgow and the commitment from individuals is inspired and inspiring. An increasing number of Glasgow’s organisations are signing up to encourage and support their staff to mentor as part of their working week. It is a privilege to work with so many people so determined to help young people realise their full potential and be defined by their talent and never their circumstances.

“As well as mentoring, our Talent Taster Programme is expanding and already revolutionising work experience for individuals and organisations alike. We have a number of very significant plans coming to fruition and will be announced in the next few months”

Case Study - Craig Thomson and Afonso Cardoso -

We hear about the impact Craig Thomson (mentor) and Afonso Cardoso (mentee) have had on each other during their MCR journey. They met 2 years ago while Alfonso was a pupil at St Andrew’s Secondary School in Glasgow. Afonso had arrived from Angola aged 15 with 2 of his brothers seeking asylum after their freedom and lives were considered at risk. Craig Thomson his mentor is a senior surveyor with Network Rail in Glasgow.

There is always a way.

There is always a way. Five words that have stuck with Afonso since he first meet Craig. A short, powerful sentence that became Afonso’s mantra and has seen him leave St Andrew’s Secondary School to take up a place on an HNC in Manufacturing Engineering at Glasgow Kelvin College. The first step in fulfilling Afonso’s dream of becoming an engineer.

Afonso Cardoso explains: “I always tell my little brother, you only get one shot at life, you don’t want to miss or mess up any opportunities. So I was delighted to be paired with Craig. Craig’s a cool guy, he’s very chilled. It didn’t take long for us to find things in common. He’s easy to talk to and I knew his experience of working with Network Rail could be invaluable in helping me get my career on the right track.”

“Craig gave his time generously. My confidence got a huge boost, so did my English skills. He suggested different ways to go about certain things, like staying on at school. He encouraged me to work through the various steps to get where I wanted to go.

“Sometimes we hit a wall, sometimes things didn’t work out the way I planned, but Craig always said ‘keep at it, we’ll find a solution, there is always a way’. Having someone there for you, someone believing in you, someone pushing you on, that’s what made the difference.”

Once Afonso completes his HNC, he plans to continue studying for an HND in Electrical Engineering at City of Glasgow College. With Craig's help Afonso also applied for, and achieved, a Network Rail scholarship which helps support him while at college.

Craig Thomson is quick to point out that Afonso always did the hard work. He explains: "Throughout life I've been lucky to receive plenty of support and encouragement, at university, during my apprenticeship and even now as a senior surveyor. I felt it was time I paid some of this back. Thankfully my employer is very supportive of the MCR programme, that's where I heard about it. The training was first-class and much more in-depth than I expected. You could feel the passion radiating out from all the people involved in the programme and that rubbed off.

"I was keen to meet Afonso. I'd heard nothing but good things about him from everyone I met at St Andrew's, but the nerves still grab you before that first meeting. I mean, what if we'd nothing to talk about, how exactly was I going to be of benefit?"

"In the end I had nothing to worry about. Afonso is an astonishing young man and we hit it off from the word go. We had loads of similar interests, but what really struck me was his positivity and his enthusiasm. He was smart and far more sensible than I was at 15. I was impressed that he already knew where he wanted to go in life. Together we refocused his attention on the education he'd need to get a job in engineering. We discussed the pros and cons of staying on at school. It was a pleasure to play a small part in helping him progress down his chosen career path. I'm very proud Afonso is supported by the company I work for."

When teased, come on there's far too much mutual appreciation going on, there must have been something about your relationship that wasn't perfect? Both were quick to say: "Well he supports a rubbish football team, but as we've learned there is always a way. Perhaps with a little more time I can persuade him to change his mind and follow a better team."

With Afonso now settled in further education their formal mentoring relationship has come to an end, but they've stayed in touch. Afonso is grateful that Craig is still around to act as a sounding board and as Craig puts it; "We like each other so it's great to grab a coffee every now and then and hear how Alfonso is getting on."

After such a positive experience Craig now mentors another young person and is keen to encourage others to join MCR. He says: "There are young people out there who need someone to tell them there is always a way. If you can do that, then it only takes an hour a week to make a real difference. The young people aren't forced to take part, they want to. They're smart, they know it's an opportunity to improve their options after school.

"What would I say to someone thinking about mentoring? It's a no brainer. Go for it, and once you have, stick with it and enjoy seeing the young person flourish."

You won't be surprised to learn Afonso shares Craig's enthusiasm for the MCR project. When asked about what he would say to a young person considering having a mentor Afonso adds; "Nothing comes from nothing. Most of the schools don't offer this opportunity so you're lucky to have it. Go for it. Then don't be silly or rude, your mentor might have a different view of the world, but that could be just what's needed."

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Notes to editors

Find out more about MCR Pathways or how to become a mentor or get involved in the Talent Taster Programme visit <http://mcrpathways.org/>

Read the full 2017 Impact report <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=38545&p=0>

Watch the latest film from MCR and hear from young people and their mentors on <https://youtu.be/Wr5VPblLuh8>



Can you help a young person realise their full potential and be defined by their talent, not their circumstances? The Herald is supporting the Young Glasgow Talent programme by MCR Pathways in its citywide plan and national ambition. More disadvantaged young people are signing up for mentors to help them overcome barriers and inequality to be all they can be. One hour a week and a willingness to put a young person first are all you need. You'll make and experience a life-changing difference in helping a young person to find, grow and use their talents. MCR Pathways will provide all the training and support you need. For more information or to register, please go to www.youngglasgowtalent.org or email info@mcrpathways.org. We can't wait to hear from you!

MCR Pathways is a pioneering partnership of the MCR Foundation and Glasgow City Council, actively supported by an increasing number of Glasgow's key organisations including The Wheatley Group, Glasgow Life, City Building, University of Strathclyde, The Herald, Glasgow Kelvin College, Glasgow Clyde College, Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership and Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.