



A synthesis of published research  
on mentoring and befriending  
for The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

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The Rowan Group, University of Aberdeen, July 2007



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### Introduction

This review of published research on mentoring and befriending brings together evidence about research and practice in youth mentoring and befriending in the UK. It explores findings from academic literature and includes evidence from reports and summaries of mentoring and befriending projects from the UK.

A considerable number of young people and volunteers have taken part in mentoring and befriending relationships in the UK in recent years. A number of reports have indicated that the experience of mentoring and befriending can be enjoyable and a positive experience for both mentors and mentees. However, research evidence about the value of the intervention has been at best mixed due largely to the complexity of approaches that exist and the lack of any longitudinal research.

This synthesis explores some of these questions in relation to current research on the topic. It is important to take a hard look at mentoring and befriending and the ideas behind these forms of intervention in order to gain the most from work with young people.

Since much of the research has focused on mentoring rather than befriending, the findings reported here tend to emphasise mentoring.

### The context for mentoring and befriending - young people, transitions and vulnerability

- Transitions for all young people pose increasingly complex challenges, many of which have not faced previous generations (p13)
- Disadvantaged young people are likely to bear the brunt of structural changes and some will experience an accumulation of disadvantage over the lifecourse (p14)
- Definitions of young people as vulnerable or excluded are contested and encompass a wide range of backgrounds, needs and aspirations (p14)
- The concept of the risk society has been used to explain the changes in late modernity and the effects of globalisation. In this context, young people face both opportunities and risks with few safety nets to protect the vulnerable (p14-15)
- A social capital framework may help to explain how mentoring processes relate to support available from family, peer and community networks (p15-17)

### Psycho-social theories and youth mentoring and befriending

- Theories of resilience, attachment and ecological theory have influenced the development of mentoring. However these have failed to locate young people as active participants and are limited in explaining the interaction between structure and agency on transitions and expectations. (p19-23)

### Mentoring and UK policy – an emerging infrastructure

- Government has given considerable attention to mentoring and set up or supported a range of schemes across the country. Organisations such as the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF), BNS (Scotland) and the Scottish Mentoring Network have supported this development and worked towards building up guidelines, standards and understanding about the value of mentoring and befriending (p25-30)

### Defining mentoring and befriending

- Befriending is more established since it has been a feature of the social care landscape for more than twenty five years. However it has attracted less attention than mentoring (p31)
- Mentoring and befriending are similar in many respects but it is important to highlight the distinctive elements of each in order to evaluate interventions based on these models (p31, 36)
- Mentoring and befriending are often part of larger projects or schemes and assessing the benefits of this element is problematic since many of these start from different points and emphasise sometimes competing agendas
- Befriending emphasises the value of a strong relationship between the participants and although other developments can take place, these are incidental (p31, 39)
- Mentoring cannot take place without a strong relationship being built up but in general, it includes other goals (p 31, 39)

- Both forms of intervention aim to build resilience in young people and to help them to survive challenges and difficulties in their lives (p38)
- Both work with young people who are experiencing difficulties. These young people may be disaffected for a variety of reasons and this may demand different approaches (p38, 47)

### Interventions

In reviewing interventions in this field it is important to be aware of the difficulties facing evaluators and to note some key challenges. Firstly it is difficult to isolate the impact of the mentoring and befriending interventions from other initiatives or the overall programme in which these are embedded. Secondly, caution needs to be exercised in comparing findings from different studies, since both interventions and evaluations may have different starting points, aims and methods. Finally the term 'mentoring' holds different meanings for different participants and is used in many different ways. While befriending is a less contested term, there are considerable questions about the underlying assumptions about this form of intervention (p43-44)

### Positive findings

- Those who took part in mentoring, who developed meaningful relationships and who continued to meet with their mentors over time, reported increased social confidence and feelings of social support (p45, 49, 50, 52)
- For some young people, where a meaningful relationship developed with a befriender or a mentor, it offered a positive alternative to other relationships with professionals and family, providing support, the possibility of a reciprocal relationship and challenge (p45, 47, 49)
- For a number of young people, successful mentoring and befriending offered a springboard to renegotiate previously problematic relationships with family and social networks (p46-47, 51)
- A mix of mentoring/befriending and other interventions appeared to be valuable for successful outcomes but it was difficult to disentangle the benefits of mentoring itself (p44, 52-53)
- Young people leaving care, particularly valued the 'soft skills' of the befriending elements of the mentoring schemes (p49)

- Building and sustaining mentoring relationships is a fragile and uncertain process demanding considerable time, skill and persistence which is sometimes not available within the resources available to mentoring interventions (p45, 50)
- In some programmes, those who reported meaningful relationships with mentors, were more likely to return to education or training and to do reasonably well than those whose relationships failed (p44)
- For some young people, involvement in a meaningful mentoring or befriending relationship was linked to increased involvement in their community (p46-47)
- Mentoring and befriending programmes that were well planned and which followed clear systems for recruitment, training and support to both mentors and young people were more likely to offer the *potential* for meaningful mentoring to develop. However evidence was mixed on this with questions arising around 'programme integrity' and the level of adherence to such systems (p46, 52)

### Negative findings

- A number of studies have examined 'mentoring' with offenders or young people who are defined as at risk of social exclusion but this kind of mentoring is based on imposed rather than voluntary relationships and findings need to be treated with caution (p48)
- Several UK studies have found mentoring had little impact on offending behaviour and some participants were *more* likely to be involved in criminal activities *after* being mentored, than those who did not take part. It may be the case that mentoring programmes are not suitable for certain groups of young people (p46)
- Many young people rejected the opportunity to be mentored or befriended and substantial numbers dropped out of schemes (p46)
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining potential mentors and befrienders were evident. The absence of male mentors/befrienders was a recurring issue (p52)
- Mentoring schemes in prison seem to offer benefits but these do not appear to last beyond the prison gates (p49)

- Large numbers of those involved in mentoring projects failed to develop relationships at all (p46, 50)
- The endings of relationships, when a strong relationship has been developed, can be very problematic. This is particularly evident when endings are poorly planned but can also be true despite planning by agencies. This was true in both befriending and mentoring relationships (p51)
- The realities of managing mentoring projects with limited budgets, high turnovers of personnel, uneven skill bases and challenging target groups posed considerable challenges (p52)

### Conclusions

There is a rich and broad range of work taking place under the banner of mentoring. It is clear that within the wealth of mentoring and befriending practice, some important strands of work are being undertaken. However, the picture of mentoring across the UK is very much of a patchwork of effort and a number of tensions are evident. Much of this relates to the diversity of provision and the ways in which mentoring is in danger of becoming a 'catch all term'.

A tentative model based on previous work and on the findings from this review is offered as a means of highlighting the complex picture of mentoring and befriending across the UK.

### Recommendations for further research

- 1 Evaluation needs to be more theoretically based and should relate to current theoretical work on youth transitions vulnerability and the wider social and economic frameworks
- 2 Practitioners and managers of schemes should have access to current debates and discourses about young people, their development and their social contexts
- 3 Evaluation strategies should take account of longitudinal aspects of relationships between young people and mentors. Recognition of both short term and long terms implications could assist in planning interventions
- 4 More investigation is required into the impact of mentoring and befriending on families, peers and communities

- 5 Examination of the value and challenges faced within long term mentoring and befriending interventions is urgently required. More intensive scrutiny of mentoring and befriending relationships over time may be particularly useful in identifying pointers for this
- 6 Better intelligence about which groups of young people and which circumstances are most amenable to mentoring/befriending interventions is required
- 7 Attention needs to be paid to the interaction between different styles of mentoring that may exist in the lives of those targeted by mentoring or befriending interventions
- 8 The potential for linking internal and external evaluation strategies should be explored. This could yield insights into key dimensions of mentoring for example in examining the different interpretations held by young people, mentors/befrienders, managers, young people and other stakeholders. Making links between external and internal evaluations could build a more rounded picture of mentoring and could contribute to a stronger relationship between research and practice
- 9 Examination of the ways in which mentoring and befriending relate to other forms of intervention and other forms of support is required
- 10 Examination of the ways in which mentoring and befriending relate to other forms of intervention and other forms of support within young people's social networks may yield valuable insights. A 'portfolio' of support which includes mentoring/befriending may be more valuable than stand alone interventions
- 11 Study of schemes where retention of mentors and befrienders has been successful may offer a fruitful area for exploration
- 12 Examination of resilience of young people and their families living in difficult circumstances, over time, may reveal factors which could assist in the planning of future mentoring and befriending interventions
- 13 More understanding is required of relationships between young people and their mentors/befrienders which do not necessarily move into meaningful 'mentoring' relationships
- 14 Analysis of the underlying reasons for 'failed' relationships is urgently required

This review of published research on mentoring and befriending brings together evidence about research and practice in youth mentoring and befriending in the UK. This represents a new approach in bringing together published research on these concepts which are clearly linked but which have developed in parallel rather than together. This synthesis enables linkages and differences to be made with the intention of highlighting potential for synergy between the two concepts. Overall the review sets out to locate befriending and mentoring for young people within a coherent framework.

Involvement in a planned mentoring relationship has become a feature of the lives of a considerable number of young people in the UK in recent years. It is a concept that has great appeal and anecdotal reports have indicated that the experience of mentoring can be an enjoyable and positive experience for both mentors and mentees. Accounts given by young people to mentoring conferences and events have reinforced beliefs that mentoring can play a positive part in supporting young people to navigate their way to adulthood. On the face of it, mentoring appears to be a common sense approach to the complex array of issues and difficulties that face young people, particularly those who are growing up in poverty and disadvantage.

However, research evidence about the value of the intervention has been at best mixed due largely to the complexity of approaches that exist and the lack of any longitudinal research.

Befriending on the other hand has been a feature of the policy landscape for a considerable time although it has not attracted the same fervour among its supporters as mentoring. It has a low key image and although there are around 800 projects in England and Scotland alone, it remains very much in the background. Befriending takes place across age groups and offers an additional relationship to individuals who experience social isolation for a variety of reasons. Claims for the benefits of befriending have emphasised the modest benefits of the introduction of an unrelated adult into the lives of vulnerable young people ranging from young children to young adults. Thus befriending is frequently described as an adjunct to other services, supporting the work of the caring services and providing respite for young people and their families for a brief interlude.

Researching mentoring and befriending poses considerable challenges since both terms are poorly understood. Mentoring is a highly contentious and contested concept and the term itself encompasses a range of meanings and assumptions (Hall, 2003; Philip, 2000). Befriending, on the other hand, is relatively well understood in general terms and is a long standing intervention within the UK.

However the two terms are frequently conflated which has led to some confusion over the distinctive components of each concept (see for example, Buist, 2000). In setting out to strengthen the evidence base a number of pitfalls await both researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

This has led Boaz and Pawson (2005) to conclude, in relation to mentoring alone, that the sheer complexity of the questions to be asked has undermined the usefulness of many previous reviews leading them to examine oranges and apples but talk fruit (p189). In other words it is important to resist simplistic overgeneralisation of findings from particular studies of particular aspects of mentoring and befriending. It is also important to respect the character of both mentoring and befriending rather than to adopt a 'one size fits all' framework. With this in mind the following aims underpin the study.

## Aims and objectives of the Review

### Aims:

- To provide a synthesis of published research on mentoring and befriending as voluntary activities within the UK
- To explore the value of different theoretical models of mentoring and befriending in explaining dimensions of both concepts

### Objectives:

- To highlight differences and similarities within and between the concepts of mentoring and befriending
- To focus on interventions targeting young people and vulnerable young adults defined as those who are socially excluded, experiencing mental health problems or difficulties in living independently (SEU, 1999)
- To explore mentoring and befriending as voluntary activities carried out on an individual and peer basis
- To identify from recent research findings, evidence of positive and negative impacts of mentoring and befriending
- To highlight issues arising from current research
- To identify gaps and priorities for future research

### Parameters of the Review

The review will include consideration of published research in the following areas:

Mentoring and befriending within planned programmes

Mentoring and befriending of vulnerable young people and young adults up to the age of 25

Interventions which aim to reintegrate socially excluded or marginalised young people into the mainstream through employment, training, education and criminal justice

### Structure and organisation of the Review

Even within the parameters outlined above, the emerging literature on mentoring and befriending is vast, ranging from reviews of reviews to large scale evaluations of initiatives, to very in-depth studies of small scale initiatives. This review focuses principally on published and peer reviewed research with an emphasis on UK based work.



The review also takes account of the extensive body of 'grey literature' which includes unpublished reports, in-house evaluations and localised accounts of interventions which often inform policy and practice but which have not been subject to the review process of mainstream research. Such reports often offer insights into innovative approaches, draw attention to unanticipated challenges encountered in setting up projects, highlight emerging issues and provide a useful addition to peer reviewed articles and research reports. They also indicate promising leads and emerging benefits or problems which in turn can inform more focused research and policy agendas. Clearly the grey literature can offer a form of evidence that is up-to-date and accessible to a wide audience and engage with a readership that may have limited access or interest in academic research findings.

However such reports are frequently designed for purposes other than research and this means that their aims, methodology and findings need to be viewed in a critical light. Moreover since such reports often focus on attracting sponsorship or funding, they may omit data which would be relevant for this review. Because many report on pilot or short term projects, inevitably they have limited value in assessing the longer term implications of the approach taken. Few reports offer a theoretical framework against which reported findings can be analysed.

Overall 'grey literature' is not subject to the checks and balances that come into play in the assessment of academic research. Therefore it is important to note that it offers one kind of evidence and should be analysed in this light.

In aiming to fulfil the remit, this review is organised into a number of different sections. In the following section, we set the scene with an overview of the context for mentoring and befriending of young people within the UK. This draws on existing UK research on young people, mentoring and transitions and links these with theorising of social capital. Following this, existing frameworks for mentoring and befriending are discussed.

This is linked to a brief overview of dominant theoretical frameworks that have influenced the development of mentoring and befriending in the UK. The emerging infrastructure of mentoring and befriending is then described and this is followed by an examination of recent research studies of mentoring and befriending with vulnerable populations. Finally we discuss differences and similarities between the concepts and explore emerging themes which may indicate the potential for building new models for the concepts.

## The context for mentoring and befriending - young people, transitions and vulnerability

It is clear that young people in general have faced more extended and complex forms of transition to adulthood over the last two decades than ever before (Coles, 2000). Research on young people's lives has demonstrated that the traditional pathways to adulthood have given way to much more uncertain trajectories. Arguably these pathways are more uneven than they have ever been and are taking place within a context in which growing sections of young people have been defined as posing problems for themselves and for the fabric of society (Griffin, 1993). While there is little new in such 'moral panics' about young people, the linkages to theories of the 'underclass' have had a powerful influence on current UK social policy on young people (Fahmy, 2006). One strand of youth research has examined the complexities of these youth transitions and how these are located within the wider social and economic contexts and policy frameworks of governments (Wyn and White, 1998).

Structural factors such as the collapse of the youth labour market, the shift of responsibility for young people from the state to the family and changes in benefit regulations for young people over the age of sixteen have impacted on young people in general but this has been most marked for those deemed to be already disadvantaged or at risk (Fahmy, 2006).

Lifecourse studies have also demonstrated that adulthood, far from being the 'calm waters to be reached after the storm and stress of adolescence' as was frequently the theme in early youth research is increasingly riven with contradictions and uncertainties such that traditional markers of adulthood are contested and uncertain (Macdonald and Marsh, 2005).

Jones (2005) has recently highlighted how transitions vary for different sections of the youth population. Thus groups such as those living in care are likely to experience accelerated transitions in relation to leaving home and have little choice over becoming independent. Young people with more settled family supports and social networks may be adult in some respects but remain dependent on parents in other areas, for example they may be living away from home but remain financially reliant on their parents. For some, accelerated transition in one respect, such as early childbearing, may be offset by parental support in helping with finance and with childcare. For those forced into accelerated transitions, few safety nets of support are available and this may lead to or reinforce existing patterns of exclusion.



The notion of vulnerability and disaffection are themselves contested terms (Piper and Piper, 1998:33; Williamson and Middlemiss, 1999). It is beyond the scope of this review to delve into this area in depth but it is important to acknowledge that the term 'vulnerability' encompasses a wide range of young people with often very different backgrounds, needs and aspirations. Similarly the term 'socially excluded youth' is subject to a variety of interpretations and is in danger of obscuring rather than explaining the contexts of young people. These definitions have frequently been condensed into the acronym NEET to describe young people who are 'not in education, employment or training'.

The concept of the 'risk' society has been used to explain the ways in which social and technological changes have been so profound that previous certainties about adulthood, family and social life have been challenged (Beck, 1992, Giddens, 1990). As a result of the breakdown of traditional markers of adulthood, new opportunities are created for young people to construct their own biographies as they move towards adulthood. Giddens (ibid) has suggested that such fluidity and change can open up the potential for new forms of relationships and associations since traditional distinctions have become more blurred.

Thus young people have more opportunities to construct their own biographies and to develop new kinds of relationship with peers and with adults. The downside of this is that fewer safety nets exist for young people who make the wrong decisions, who fail to thrive or who have experienced difficulties. However these changes have not erased all traditional barriers according to a strong body of research which has demonstrated the enduring power of class, race and gender in determining the trajectories of young people (Macdonald and Marsh, 2005). It is clear that disadvantage in childhood follows young people across the lifecourse with health inequalities having an enduring and cumulative impact in later life (Wilkinson, 2004).

Nevertheless the opening up of potential for new kinds of associations between young people and adults provides both an opportunity and a rationale for mentoring and befriending as mechanisms for assisting young people to engage in reciprocal relationships with adults away from formal professional roles. Such relationships may be complementary to or compensatory for existing family or kin relationships. This has reinforced interest in the potential of mentoring as a mechanism for helping young people to negotiate this uncharted territory.

By 'engineering' supportive relationships, it is envisaged that young people who lack strong family and social networks, can be assisted to develop strategies for navigating their way through the 'risk society'.

Linked to the concept of the risk society, the notion of social capital has been used as an explanatory framework for these changes in family support, community networks and education (Portes, 1998). Coleman and Putnam have been particularly influential in developing the concept and in linking it to assumptions about the value of youth mentoring.

Social capital consists of the connections between individuals and their social networks. Features such as norms of trust, mutuality and reciprocity, shared interests and community are central to bringing people together to co-operate and to build socially cohesive communities (Infed, 2005). Social capital can act both as resources for individuals and as a basis for collective action. Social theorists such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) have all explored the role of relationships in building (and constraining) and diminishing social capital. As with mentoring, social capital is a highly contested term which has been criticised as lacking explanatory power and as becoming an imprecise term which holds a range of meanings (Morrow, 1999).

However the concept has been heavily drawn on in research into disadvantaged youth and their role within neighbourhoods and communities. The work of James Coleman in the USA (1988) has been particularly influential in this regard. Coleman's study of students in high school in the 1960s pointed to a growing divide between the generations, with young people more likely to be swayed by their peers than parents or schools. He argued that the family and the school had lost control over the socialisation of young people and that peer cultures embodied hostility towards the older generation. Coleman attributed many of these ills to the growth in single parent families, the high mobility of families which made it difficult for them to put down roots within communities and to the breakdown of community norms. Fahmy (2006) has suggested that social capital can become an excluding mechanism for young people,

strong community ties can serve as a mechanism for the exclusion of young people when neighbourhood cohesion is defined in opposition to youth as a 'social problem' (p60)

Putnam (1995) has taken the concept of social capital further into the examination of the extent of voluntary engagement and community networks. Social capital is linked to civic responsibility and is based on the development of dense social networks that link families, communities and institutions. These networks are themselves dependent on notions of trust, reciprocity and co-operation which bind community members together, as 'social cement'. He suggests that there is a decline in social capital in that fewer people are involved in voluntary associations and there is a breakdown in trust and reciprocity. However the measurement of young people's involvement in voluntary participation may be underestimated, since many existing measures focus on mainstream political involvement, community, sporting and other organisations. Research into young people's involvement in, for example, campaigning organisations, has suggested that rather than 'opting out', considerable numbers engage in different ways within communities but that this often goes unrecognised (Roker et al, 1999, Fahmy, 2006).

Putnam distinguishes between different kinds of social capital that influence social cohesion. Thus *bonding capital* acts as social cement, bringing communities together around shared norms and practices.

In some circumstances, this can become excluding and inward looking, leading community members to view the outside world with some suspicion. It may also lead to pressure to comply with dominant community norms and through this to become a mechanism for exclusion. Thus some networks can lead to a poverty of expectation, making it difficult for others to move out and lowering expectations of members. The notion of *bridging capital* may offer wider horizons, encouraging members to move on and out of their own community to take advantage of new opportunities and to broaden their expectations. A number of critics have pointed out that the indicators of social capital used by Putnam may not be easily translated into a UK context. In addition, the indicators may not be particularly useful in measuring social capital amongst young people, particularly when we consider the shifts in values held within the context of the risk society suggested by Giddens (ibid).

Putnam (2000) has explored the decline of social capital in the USA which he characterised in *Bowling Alone* as the demise of civic responsibility and engagement within communities, pointing to the demise of voluntary associations and community engagement.

The work of Coleman and Putnam has been extensively criticised as ahistorical and as taking an overly romantic view of 'community' with Morrow (1999) arguing that both Putnam and Coleman overlooked empirical evidence which demonstrated how supportive social ties continue to provide important networks of support within disadvantaged communities; for ignoring the impact of gender and for uncritically transposing their conclusions to settings beyond the USA to societies where different cultural realities prevail. Morrow also makes the important point that both Putnam and Coleman take a top down view of children and young people rather than taking account of how children and young people themselves actively construct and negotiate social capital within their families and social networks.

Bourdieu's work stands outside these two frameworks and delineates social capital in relation to the perpetuation of power, linking it with the accumulation of economic capital. Bourdieu explored how elites can use education as a mechanism for ensuring that they can retain their power and exclude other groups from participating. While he did not explicitly deal with young people and their family relationships, Bourdieu has been influential in examining the subtleties of such processes of exclusion.

The lens of social capital and in particular, that of Putnam and Coleman has exerted a powerful influence both on the framing of social exclusion policies and on emerging work on youth mentoring in the UK. Taken together with ideas about communitarianism popularised by Etzioni (1993) the concept of social capital has become interlinked with the development of mentoring. The notion of providing supportive relationships which mimic extended family relations or neighbourliness is a recurring theme in mentoring literature as is the idea of mentoring as a mechanism for recreating or strengthening community involvement. Informal mentoring can act as a means of building social capital for mentors and mentees by opening up new kinds of relationship, recognising the latent skills which exist within communities and building solidarity. It may also be viewed as a means of linking marginalised groups such as the young and the elderly and fostering mutual support and learning between the two. Overall 'good' social capital can promote social cohesion by bringing communities together around commitments to voluntarism and shared values.

Befriending interventions aim to build a form of 'bonding social capital' by fostering strong relationships between the befriender and the befriended with the overall aim of supporting the individual to integrate into and be accepted by their social networks. However, befriending may be a source of social capital for those who remain isolated from the mainstream, by providing an additional individual in the life of the befriended.

However it is less clear whether the benefits of this relationship extend beyond the intervention or this form of 'loaned friendship'. On the other hand, mentoring can involve both bonding and bridging capital in helping young people to build up their social networks or to move into fields that might have previously been closed to them. Some mentoring interventions set out to offer alternatives to poor family support and involvement with 'risky' peer groups and to encourage young people to broaden their horizons beyond their immediate neighbourhood and the low expectations assumed to pertain within these.

What is often neglected in this scenario is the existence of social capital within deprived families and neighbourhoods which may themselves be rich in social ties and support, some of which can offset the effects of poverty. In relation minority ethnic groups, existing social capital within communities is more likely to be acknowledged in mentoring interventions which actively seek to help recreate pride or understanding of cultural backgrounds or shared identities which may have been neglected (Sanchez and Colon, 2005).

We now turn to an examination of how the concept of social capital has linked with psycho-social theories about youth to 'frame' mentoring and befriending interventions.

## Psycho-social theories and youth mentoring/befriending

### Resilience theory and attachment theory

Some young people in high risk situations manage to overcome the adversities and the risks inherent in growing up in disadvantaged circumstances. This has led researchers to develop the concept of resilience, an exploration of the factors that enable some young people to overcome adversity. This strand of youth research has shifted the focus of psychological research from examination of the failures of youth to an emphasis on the capacity of youth (Rutter, 1995, Schoon and Bynner, 2003, Seaman and Sweeting, 2004).

Much of the background to this work emerged in the USA and in particular from a longitudinal study undertaken by Werner and colleagues of young people growing up in disadvantaged communities in Hawaii (Werner and Smith, 1982, Werner, 1990). They identified a list of risk factors which were likely to make young people vulnerable as they grew up – factors such as poverty, ill health, poor family support. However they found that a substantial number of those young people, despite these difficulties, did make successful transitions to adulthood. One significant factor which was shared by these young people was the presence of a consistent care giver from within the community who provided continuing support and encouragement over a number of years.

From this the researchers concluded that adult mentors could make a significant contribution to the future well-being of such vulnerable young people. Further research went on to explore the nature of the 'protective factors' or 'steeling mechanisms' which enabled young people to thrive (Rutter, 1995).

In Putnam's terms, such resilience is a form of bridging capital, allowing young people to move out of difficult circumstances and to become integrated into the mainstream. Both internal and external factors make up the 'protective factors'. Schoon and Bynner (2003) identify three key sets of variables that act as 'protective factors' and these are summarised below,

- 1 The attributes of children themselves – who enjoy school, present fewer behavioural problems, have social contacts and have high aspirations
- 2 The characteristics of their families - a stable and protective family environment with parents actively involved in their child's education, read to their child and take them out
- 3 The aspects of the wider social context – availability of external support e.g. a teacher who takes an interest



The question remains open about whether it is those children who are *already* more attractive and more responsive to others that build up resilience, whether the intervention of a long term adult in itself contributes a form of resistance to difficulties or whether it is a combination of factors that is influential in these processes. From another perspective, that of the new sociology of childhood, it is clear that the resources of young people themselves have often been overlooked in earlier studies,

While children may in a very real sense be dependent on adults for substantial periods of time, this does not preclude the development of their sense of identity and their social and moral capabilities (Smart et al, 2001:13)

From this it appears that resilience theory suggests that 'the rich get richer' – the more resources you have the more likely you are to succeed in overcoming the odds that confront and challenge in everyday life. However it is equally clear that disadvantage is cumulative and the piling on of difficulties and challenges may undermine individual attempts to deal with these.

Gilligan (1999) has further suggested that, resilience is of interest to policy makers since it focuses firstly on what young people themselves can do rather than on their failings and secondly since it suggests that some interventions enable the transfer of resilience to different settings,

These areas are highlighted partly because, although apparently obvious, they may be easily neglected and partly because they may be more susceptible to professional influence than home life (Gilligan, 1999: 38)

Similarly Seaman et al (2005) found that young people growing up in disadvantaged areas of Glasgow identified friendships in their peer groups as providing important advice, knowledge and support in keeping safe in risky situations.

Supportive relationships may be significant in tackling problems, in building up the capacity of the individual,

A young person's sense of a secure base is cultivated by a sense of belonging within supportive social networks, by attachment type relationships to reliable and responsive people and by routines and structures in their lives (Gilligan, 1999: 39)

For Gilligan it is the mix of supportive relationships that promote resilience rather than reliance on one key figure. Thus professionals should endeavour to cultivate personal and supportive relationships but recognise that the support of key adults in a young person's social network is not overlooked or undermined.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) is linked with the concept of resilience in pointing to the importance of a key carer in the life of the young child. Consistency in this initial caregiver is important for instilling a secure sense of self and a belief in oneself in the developing child. Conversely those who do not have such a relationship, are deemed as likely to be predisposed to mental health difficulties and offending.

While Bowlby argued it was attachment of the young child to the mother that was vital, more recent proponents of the theory have suggested that attachment to a consistent care giver, whoever this may be, is the important factor. Gilligan draws attention to the role of attachment figures who may not be the most important person in the life of the young person, but who are available over time. Attachment theory has been a guiding framework for some mentoring projects such as *Promise* (Dallos and Comely-Ross, 2005).

Key to both theoretical frameworks is the notion that associations with a mentor are ideally 'everyday interactions' and part of the mundane daily rituals rather than artificially 'engineered' and occasional. In this sense a mentor is ideally situated when she/he is part of the network within the everyday practices of the young person, rather than an occasional influence.

However Schoon and Bynner (2003) among others concluded that it is important to note the limitations of individual efforts to tackle the often overwhelming challenges that face young people growing up in poverty,

Yet, even resilient young people who show high competences and aspirations despite experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage do not succeed to the same extent as young people from more privileged backgrounds. Especially among the cohort born in 1970, resilient young men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to obtain degree-level qualifications or to enter a professional career than their more privileged peers, even when controlling for academic ability and level of aspiration. These findings suggest that resourcefulness and individual competences are not a guarantee for overcoming high-risk conditions (Schoon and Bynner, 2003: 26)

It is also important to note that the focus of the resilience literature is firmly on the individual constructing relationships with adults and the significance of supportive peer relationships is rarely if ever mentioned. For some vulnerable young people, it is clear that adults may be a source of anxiety rather than support, leading some to feel more fearful of developing strong bonds with unrelated adults. Overcoming such resistance may demand considerable expertise and time to develop trust. Equally it is clear that socially supportive relationships can bring conflict as well as support (Rhodes, 2003).

Locating appropriate supportive adults within communities is clearly a problematic process and findings from research on informal mentoring, has demonstrated that it is sometimes the most unexpected adults that young people seek out as mentors (Philip and Hendry, 2000). The artificial 'grafting on' of a mentor or befriender in opposition to this might be counterproductive and may as Colley has suggested, undermine informal and community based sources of support (Colley, 2003:15).

In addition, resilience theory focuses on the adaptive strategies and capacities of young people rather than framing young people as actively interacting with their environment and as capable of critically reflecting on the uneven playing field in which they are struggling to succeed.

Clearly important implications for the design and organisation of mentoring and befriending can be identified in the resilience literature. Firstly it suggests that promoting involvement within networks and communities may be valuable in building up a sense of self worth and efficacy. Secondly, building on the strengths of the individual rather than focusing on failings represents a shift in psycho-social theorising about youth as Rutter has noted (Rutter, 1995). Thirdly, this holds implications for strategies for recruiting, training and retaining skilled adults to work in this field (Crimmens et al, 2004).

### Ecological model of human development

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development forms a bridge between themes of resilience and mentoring and has been particularly influential in mentoring literature and practice in the USA. Bronfenbrenner (1986) located the young person at the centre of concentric circles which comprise of the family, community and the wider society.

The developing individual gradually moves into and through these circles to interact with wider networks. What takes place in one circle such as the family will have implications for how young people approach relationships at the meso (local level) and in the macro (societal) level.

The young person develops a range of skills in navigating this increasingly complex social landscape. Thus changes in the 'macrosystem', such as the collapse of the youth labour market, changes in social policy, the unemployment of parents and poverty, will all impact on other aspects of the family and community (the mesosystem). Children and young people who are located at the centre of these systems are most likely to be affected by changes in the external environment. For Bronfenbrenner, task centred activity with non-related adults outside the home and immediate family are important for developing social skills and understanding. For mentors and mentees this involves working together over time on teaching and learning about how to deal with the social world. The role of the mentor is to assist in this and to create a strong bond with the young person over time which will act as a springboard for dealing with the more complex tasks.

For Bronfenbrenner and Morris the characteristics of the individual are significant – thus mentors who are more nurturing than others in the young person's social network and young people who are motivated and diligent will develop supportive relationships (Hamilton and Hamilton, 2005, 350). Conversely, with this model, mentoring may not be an appropriate intervention for those who experience overwhelming problems.

Theories of ecological development and of resilience have dominated North American models of youth and mentoring. However they have largely failed to address in depth the broader changes in conceptualising young people as active participants in their own development within the wider societal context. Bronfenbrenner for example, treats the macrosystem as solid and unchanging, such that little account is taken of the extensive changes that impact on the localised contexts within which young people are making their transitions to adulthood.

## Summary

- Transitions for all young people pose increasingly complex challenges, many of which have not faced previous generations
- Disadvantaged young people are likely to bear the brunt of structural changes and some will experience an accumulation of disadvantage over the lifecourse
- Definitions of young people as vulnerable or excluded are contested and encompass a wide range of backgrounds, needs and aspirations
- The concept of the risk society has been used to explain the changes in late modernity and the effects of globalisation. In this context, young people face both opportunities and risks with few safety nets to protect the vulnerable
- Social capital may help to explain dimensions of family, community and support. A critical lens on bonding and bridging capital may assist in locating the potential of youth mentoring
- Theories of resilience, attachment and ecological theory have influenced the development of mentoring. However these have failed to locate young people as active participants and are limited in explaining the interaction between structure and agency on transitions and expectations

## Mentoring and UK policy – an emerging infrastructure

### Mentoring and UK policy

This growth in the popularity of mentoring has been reinforced by the enthusiasm of the current government for the concept. New Labour has accorded mentoring a key role within an ambitious agenda of policy changes and services for youth, family and community in the UK. As a result mentoring interventions are now embedded within key sectors of education, social welfare, employment and training. Interventions have been developed within the public, private, voluntary and corporate sectors with the majority being managed within partnerships of interested agencies. However it is important to note that this enthusiasm for mentoring was not written on a blank slate since mentoring projects had received some support from the previous Conservative administration. For example, the Mentoring Action Project (MAP) part of the European Youthstart Initiative recruited mentors to work with 1700 young people from 1993-1997. School based mentoring was also an established feature with companies such as BP actively promoting student and peer mentoring across the UK (Goodlad, 1995).

What was new with the incoming New Labour government was the extent to which mentoring was integrated into a range of government policy and centrally driven initiatives and interventions across the UK aimed at reducing social exclusion among young people (SEU, 1999). This focus on young people and social inclusion was made explicit by the initiation of the Social Exclusion Unit and the series of research based reports it made on the processes and patterns of social inclusion as they affect young people (*Bridging the Gap 1999, Social Exclusion Unit, 1999*). The location of the unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister itself signalled the importance that the incoming government accorded to the plight of disadvantaged young people. This commitment was broadly welcomed by youth policy and researchers who had observed previous governments' lack of interest in youth issues (Coles, 2000). From the outset, mentoring was viewed as an ideal mechanism for developing partnership approaches to social inclusion and for fostering 'community based' initiatives (SEU, 2000).

Within flagship programmes such as the *New Deal*, *Connexions* and *Youth Justice* schemes the mentoring role was identified as one of assisting young people to become integrated into the mainstream whether this was in relation to work, training or civic engagement. Such linkages inevitably introduced an element of coercion, since involvement in the schemes carried implications for income, for remaining in the community or neighbourhood and sometimes for a right to accommodation. Colley (2003) has cogently outlined how what she has described as ‘engagement mentoring’ encapsulated processes of coercion that often undermined young people’s and mentors’ attempts to develop relationships of trust and support.

Within some schemes, when young people left or dropped out, the mentoring dimension was terminated. Thus at a time of risk, access to this support, however minimal, was no longer available to them. Clearly this held implications for the quality and nature of the relationship between mentor and young person. The short timescales of the mentoring element, uncertainty about what constituted appropriate support and questions about the accountability of mentors, further compromised the potential for meaningful relationships.

Rhodes and Dubois (2006) have indicated in a recent review of mentoring in public policy in the USA, that within a mentoring dyad, unless there is mutual trust, a close connection between partners and a sense that one is understood, liked and respected, the bond of closeness that is essential to development of the relationship is unlikely to take place.

The voluntary commitment of the mentor was viewed as crucial. Thus both the Scottish Executive and the DfES have highlighted mentoring as an intervention in the drive to expand the number of volunteers. Within this the recruitment of volunteers from socially excluded groups which have traditionally been excluded from volunteering has become an important theme (Scottish Executive, 2004, Russell Commission, 2005). Volunteering and mentoring are both linked to notions of strengthening communities by bringing adults and young people together in joint working.

Direct funding and support was provided in schemes such as the *Connexions* scheme described below (DfES, 2000). The *Connexions* scheme demonstrated some of the positive and negative aspects of planned mentoring and the career of *Connexions* highlights broader questions about mentoring programmes.

*Connexions* was an ambitious and expensive initiative which brought together a range of services aiming to integrate personal support, careers guidance, access to qualifications and outreach work into a ‘youth support service’ for 13-19 year olds. Launched in 2001, it set out to replace the existing careers guidance service and youth services with a ‘holistic’ approach based on partnership which set out to ‘join up’ services. *Connexions* was initially planned to combine both *universal* provision to the general youth population with *targeted* support for those deemed to be at risk of dropping out. In reality the generalist service was poorly articulated (Smith, 2005) and as the programme developed, increasing emphasis was placed on working with vulnerable young people.

The role of the paid personal adviser was key to the programme since they were tasked with ‘turning lives around’ and integrating vulnerable young people into the labour market or further training. Personal advisers worked in schools, further education, training and employment, youth offending teams and social work departments. Their role was envisaged as encompassing both elements of careers advice and the building of trusting relationships with their clients. In addition to this, volunteer mentors were given a role in building up a relationship with the young person and offering support for the scheme.

However evidence of success was mixed: young people who had experienced positive relationships with their personal advisers, reported that they had made a major contribution to recognising their problems and working with them to remedy these. In contrast another group felt that advisers’ interest in employability often meant that their other needs were neglected or discounted (Hoggarth and Payne, 2006). A number further claimed that even where personal advisers did respond sensitively to the expressed needs of young people at risk, their efforts were often undermined by the institutional framework which favoured employability over the meeting of other needs such as housing, relationships etc. Since many in this section of the youth population were dealing with an array of challenges in all spheres of their lives, the short term and programme based nature of the support was frequently inadequate. The setting of targets aiming at reductions in school exclusions, raising achievement for those looked after by local authorities, reductions in drug misuse and crime suggest that personal advisers who were charged with ‘turning lives around’ were clearly under considerable pressure and were often pulled in different directions. In addition many personal advisers simply moved from being careers advisers to personal advisers without adequate training to accommodate the diverse tasks being set for them.

Tensions between the role of personal adviser and mentors were also noted and this raises questions about how different roles are managed. Mentoring is frequently framed as a voluntary activity, with part of the value being in strengthening neighbourhoods through individuals giving their time and commitment to help others. However, particularly with working with challenging young people, there may be instances where volunteers are overwhelmed by the scale of the difficulties facing some young people. The Prince's Trust model of mentoring suggests a place for both paid and voluntary mentoring, although there is no mention of youth work skills (Prince's Trust, 2005: 27).

The government Green Paper Youth Matters (DfES, 2005) announced the demise of *Connexions* in favour of a 'new targeted youth support service' which was designed to build on the successful elements of *Connexions*. This paper has been heavily criticised as failing to take account of the substantial evidence generated by the evaluation of the *Connexions* service (Coles, 2005, Hoggarth and Payne, 2006).

The evaluation of *Connexions*, and the SEU report on young adults with complex needs identified the need for holistic services and identified a 'trusted adult' as a mechanism for improving support to vulnerable young people,

Support, advice and guidance are vital to an effective transition. Most young people will receive this from parents and peers, but some – those most disadvantaged – will not be able to access such support. For such people the trusted adult – be it a mentor, personal adviser or lead professional – will be crucial (SEU, 2005:11)

Interestingly the 'trusted adult' is not framed exclusively as a volunteer mentor but could be a paid professional. In addition the SEU (2005) report on the needs of young adults while continuing to identify mentoring as an important form of intervention, acknowledges that the evidence base for mentoring is weak and that more clarity about the nature of 'successful mentoring' is required,

Action point 24: DfES and Home Office will undertake research to 'explore in more detail what makes for an effective mentoring relationship, both in terms of the characteristics and competencies of a mentor, and the roles and responsibilities they might be given to best complement the roles of the statutory workers (SEU, 2005:97)

Other government led programmes were developed specifically to bring young people into higher education. For example, the *National Mentoring Pilot Project* was given a remit to link education action zones to higher education institutions over five years.

Mentors were recruited from undergraduate students in colleges and universities to work with young people from disadvantaged areas, to promote their learning and sustain them in their courses. This was superseded by the *Aimhigher* project (2004-2006) in England as a collaboration between Brightside Trust e-mentoring scheme, Cardiff University national mentoring scheme and Middlesex University HE Mentornet scheme (The University Mentor, 2006).

### Towards an emerging infrastructure

More recently the Home Office announced that the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) has been chosen as one of the Active Communities Directorate strategic partners, one of eight Home Office strategically funded bodies and will be allocated around £1 million per year over the next 3-5 years to support the development of mentoring and befriending across the UK (MBF, 2006). The DfES is also supporting peer mentoring projects in 180 schools. In addition, mentoring pilots with looked after children are being developed and mentoring is included within the RESPECT agenda.

Within the UK, MBF provides a range of support to over 3,500 projects which they have mapped at time of writing. Although not all of these focus exclusively

on young people, a large proportion deal with the young up to the age of twenty five across a variety of fields including criminal justice, training, employment and education. In Scotland, the Scottish Mentoring Network has provided similar support for mentoring interventions across the country and has developed a number of networks to assist with this work.

The Befriending Network (Scotland) (BNS) recently reported that it has 240 member organisations and within this around 200 work with young people (BNS, 2004). All of these agencies support and advocate on behalf of mentoring, carry out research, support new organisations starting up, promote standards and pull together evidence about the benefits of this form of intervention. Within Scotland, BNS and the Scottish Mentoring Network have jointly undertaken research and development including a national mapping exercise of mentoring and befriending projects (BNS and SMN, 2004). In this respect it is clear that an infrastructure for the development of mentoring and befriending is in place and that this is closely linked to current government policy on youth.

Mentoring networks and projects have also proved adept at tapping into corporate sponsorship to enhance this political support for the development of youth mentoring.



For example, in Scotland the *Laidlaw Foundation* has worked with the Scottish Executive Education Department to provide funding to underpin the Scottish Mentoring Network in their work to support mentoring across Scotland. This has included support for the mapping exercise carried out alongside the BNS. Numerous mentoring projects have drawn on funding from charities and trusts albeit many of these have been short term and often pilot projects. A major funder for mentoring has been The Prince's Trust which has supported a range of projects which have linked young people with employment potential and personal support. The Prince's Trust has also been at the forefront of developing guidelines and frameworks for mentoring more generally. In collaboration with the government's Active Communities Unit, the Trust devised a model for group mentoring (Prince's Trust, 2005). A range of organisations participated in discussions about the value of the model which was devised to offer mentoring in group, peer and individual settings.

The mentoring movement is clearly well underway in the UK. However research has tended to lag behind this fast pace of development and a number of recurring and key questions about mentoring remain to be answered.

As a result, until recently, the evidence base relied on a few UK studies and North American body of work, not all of which had relevance to the UK context. More recently a number of reviews have consistently pointed to the absence of a sound theoretical framework for the concept of mentoring. Emerging research findings also suggest that mentoring programmes which are most successful are those which derive from a strong theoretical framework (Dubois and Rhodes, 2006).

Overall the SEU has concluded that,

despite widespread support for mentoring and peer mentoring programmes, the evidence base for mentoring is very patchy and inconclusive...It will be important that as the proposed Youth Target Support Service is developed, more work is done to explore the effectiveness of different kinds of mentoring approach, to try to isolate what makes a good mentoring programme and what makes a good mentor (SEU, 2005: 81)

In the following section we examine current definitions of befriending and mentoring in relation to this emerging infrastructure before going on to explore key themes and findings from recent research in more detail.

## Defining mentoring and befriending

### Befriending – definitions and meanings

Dean and Goodlad (1998) in a review of the role and impact of befriending in general, provide the following definition,

a relationship between two or more individuals which is initiated, supported and monitored by an agency that has defined one or more parties as likely to benefit. Ideally the relationship is non-judgemental, mutual and purposeful and there is a commitment over time (p2)

Surrey Drugs and Alcohol Team (undated) extend this definition for befriending with young people and point to the importance of the relationship in its own right,

a situation in which the young person is offered a supportive relationship which is not explicitly focused on the young person developing solutions to his or her problems (p3)

Befriending Network (Scotland) and Scottish Mentoring Network distinguish between mentoring and befriending on the basis of the BNS Befriending Spectrum (see page 39 for a fuller discussion of this spectrum).

*Companionship/befriending* as having the objective of building a trusting relationship over time with the aim of combating isolation. A growth in confidence and increase in involvement in community activities by the client is desirable but not essential.

*Befriending/Mentoring* builds on the above and included low key objectives which may be identified over weeks or months and reviewed over time.

*Mentoring* is defined as a relationship between the volunteer and the young person based on meeting agreed objectives set at the outset and where 'A social relationship if achieved is incidental' (BNS, 2004:7)

The establishment of a one to one relationship between an adult volunteer and a young person and which engages both partners is a clear goal of befriending. A consensus over certain aspects of a successful befriending relationship is evident in both the research and grey literature trawled for this review. Overall the following points suggest the elements of a good befriending relationship:

- *Supportive*: referral to a project is often due to difficulties in the home which may affect the well-being of the young person or a parent. Some referrals are due to isolation which may be having few friends, few sources of support or experiencing difficulties in the family. It may be supportive in that the befriender offers time, commitment and an interest in the young person. It may be supportive in allowing a harassed parent to devote attention to other siblings or to undertake treatment or for the young person or parent to have some respite from a distressing situation
- *Nurturing*: compensating for a lack of nurturing in the existing social network. An opportunity for emotional support through a trusting relationship. Using a shared interest to develop trust, for example, offering to help with a hobby which might be beyond the means of the parent
- *Developmental*: enabling the relationship to change over time. Learning social skills and responsive to changing circumstances
- *Trusting*: issues re confidentiality and reciprocity may arise for befrienders

- *Open-ended time commitment*: this may be compromised by difficulties in recruitment and retention of volunteers and by the 'opting out' by either party
- *Consistency*: dependable, reliable and acceptable. Accessible (sometimes negotiable boundaries)

Befriending projects have frequently provided a supportive adjunct to the social services and other welfare agencies (Thurlow et al, 2004; Smith, H, 2005; FUN Islington, 2005). BNS found that the majority of befriending projects are based in the voluntary sector with a small number in the public sector but that they have enduring links with social work services from which referrals are frequently made (BNS/SMN, 2004:13).

The following description of a Scottish befriending project offers a typical example,

It (the scheme) was set up to match adult volunteers with at-risk young people in order to provide them with the opportunity to establish a one to one relationship with a caring supportive adult outside of their family environment. It was originally established because there appeared to be a lack of appropriate adult support in the lives of many at-risk young people who had contact with the social services or the criminal justice system (Forrest, 2002:4)

Befriending projects are often devised to compensate for poor family support and to offer a consistent person in the life of the vulnerable young person. Thus befriending sets out to offer such young people a form of 'social capital' in providing resources and support that may be absent within the family or neighbourhood. For some this may be about supporting young people to 'raise their game' in relation to dealing with the 'informal agendas' of school life. BME befriending aimed to support young men from black communities to find role models within the community and in some cases, to reclaim their history. Some specialised befriending projects such as the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture (Thurlow et al, 2004), set out to support unaccompanied minors arriving in the UK, whose lives had been affected by political violence in conjunction with a psychotherapy team. The project set out to offer a 'lifelong relationship' to these young people.

In some settings the befriending role is designed to supplement family capacity and the notion of 'friendship' is central to this,

Friendship is one of the things children need most and it isn't always possible for them to get it within the family. A friend from outside who really cares may be the person who can help them feel the world is a friendly place (FUN Annual Review, 2005).

However this notion of friendship brings some element of disagreement between different befriending agencies. For example, BNS is careful to distinguish between the notions of *friendship* and *befriending* and their Code of Practice offers the following definition,

Friendship is a private, mutual relationship. Befriending is a service. (BNS, 1999, p5)

For some commentators, befriending is best described as a situation in which friendship is 'loaned' (Forrest, 2002). Thus the befriender remains the powerful partner, able to offer and withdraw friendship throughout the duration of the relationship although it may not be immediately visible until there is a crisis or a change in the relationship. As with mentoring, the ending of befriending relationships demands very careful planning which may be compromised if a befriender has to move suddenly or decides to end their commitment to the relationship or the project. The negotiation of endings has been a major point for training and discussion within BNS but nevertheless Philip et al (2004) found that some young people found the ending of intensive relationships very difficult to accept, however well these had been planned.

The voluntary commitment by both partners is central to befriending policy and practices. Thus befriending consists of two people participating in a joint activity or activities and the relationship is unlikely to thrive if either party is reluctant to meet. However moving from this friendly meeting to becoming significant is more problematic. At a policy level, volunteering has become a key theme of recent government policy as part of the drive towards inclusion (Scottish Executive, 2004; Russell Commission, 2005). Despite the exhortations of government, the recruitment and retention of volunteers remains problematic within befriending schemes, leading to a range of imaginative approaches to find appropriate volunteer befrienders.

Access to a source of volunteers by projects has implications at all levels of the intervention. A consistent supply of volunteers may open up potential to extend activities or to link with other interventions more systematically than is possible if the project struggles to find, recruit, train and retain potential befrienders. Clearly this influences the scope and intensity of individual relationships. Thus the extent of befriending relationships varies both within and across projects. The amount of time allocated to meetings between befriender and befriended varies from one hour per fortnight, to weekly meetings to monthly meetings and this in turn influences the pattern of the

interaction and the level of importance attached to it by participants.

The duration of the relationship also varies with some relationships lasting for whole school careers and beyond, while others may be a matter of weeks or months. There may be short bursts of intense activity at different points in the relationship with longer gaps at other times but continuing over a year or up to two. In others, a regular commitment of up to one year is expected. Still others begin by requesting a commitment for one year or even four years (FUN, 2005, Dallos and Comely-Ross, 2004). What is difficult to identify is the extent to which some relationships continue over time but without the development of a close bond. For example, Philip et al (2004) found some young people had first taken part in the befriending relationship with the intention of 'getting paid into the cinema' or 'taken on outings'. For some young people the meetings continued but the intervention continued to be seen in an instrumental and sometimes mercenary light. For others, the instrumental elements had given way to a mutual enjoyment of meetings and more emotional connection which built up over time with some participants indicating turning points where the relationship moved into a more intense relationship. It would be simplistic to suggest that the duration of a relationship was in itself an indicator of successful

mentoring, but taken together with other factors it is clearly an important marker of commitment by both parties. Rhodes and Dubois (2006) have shown in an analysis of US research that the longer the duration of relationship, the more likelihood of success over time and conversely shorter relationships may diminish young people's confidence and self esteem.

This timing is often dictated by the availability of volunteers although many schemes try to reach an agreement with volunteers at the outset about the regularity and duration of their commitment. Clearly the commitment of the young person is an equally key factor with many opting out of meetings or failing to keep appointments in both mentoring and befriending schemes. The relationship with the wider family appears to be highly variable with some parents actively seeking help from the agency for their own problems, others anxious that other siblings should be supported by the befriender and others uncertain about the benefits (Philip et al, 2004). The extent to which befrienders engage with the wider family varies widely across and within projects. In some instances co-ordinators who provide the link between families and befrienders, absorbed the additional role of supporting parents and supplemented the befriending role by building up relationships over time, continuing contact between matches and following up on issues raised by befrienders or young people.

In some cases, the opportunity to look in on a contrasting social world was welcomed by young people and befrienders. However some befrienders expressed dismay over the extent of the disadvantages faced by their charges and expressed frustration at the limited nature of their involvement and of other sources of support. For some this led to a reluctance to engage with the young person beyond the allocated time or activity agreed. Some young people contrasted befrienders who had reported experiencing similar difficulties favourably with those from the 'other side of the tracks' who did not understand their family or social realities.

A number of befriending projects have stood the test of time and some continue to support young people after twenty five years. However this durability is not matched by security of funding with some schemes reporting that they have had to curtail activities at certain points, due to lack of resource (Philip et al, 2004; BNS, 2003). Lack of volunteers may mean lengthy waiting times for potential befriendeds, periods of inactivity for befrienders in the period between signing up for schemes and being allocated a place on a training course and gaps between being trained and matched with a young person.

Benefits for befrienders may include the development of their own skills in dealing with vulnerable young people and these may form the basis for moving into a career in the caring professions, or simply improving their c.v. A number of befrienders have reported that it has given them more insight into the lives of those less fortunate than themselves, for revisiting their own family experiences and using the skills of bringing up their own children in helping others. For some it has offered an opportunity to develop alternative forms of relationships with young people.

Befriending could then be described as a process whereby a stranger is matched with a young person, becomes a befriender, may become a significant adult in the life of the young person and then becomes a stranger again. In the following section we explore how this relates to patterns of mentoring.

### Mentoring - definitions and meanings

Mentoring, a relative newcomer to social and youth policy in the UK occupies simultaneously a more ambiguous and a more public position than befriending. The term holds a myriad of meanings which have led it to become almost a 'catch all' description for a whole range of interventions as Pawson and colleagues noted,

Mentoring programmes with the same title and the same clientele can harbour substantially different ambitions in respect of anticipated shifts in behaviour, and it is important for decision makers and research synthesisers to recognise the many and varied ambitions of mentors, mentees and programmes (Pawson et al, 2004: 9)

The development of youth mentoring makes fewer historical links with mainstream social work and youth work than befriending. Freedman (1993) has traced the beginnings of the mentoring movement to the 'friendly visiting' of middle class women to the poor in late nineteenth Century North America which eventually gave way to the profession of social work and the diminishing of the role of the volunteer. Another significant thread is the myth of mentor which has been highly influential in setting the tone for youth mentoring as a means of easing the passage of young people, particularly young men, to adulthood. Some commentators have criticised these interpretations of the myth for promoting a highly gendered and sexist image of the concept (Colley 2001).

Although mentoring schemes have often developed in parallel rather than in association with youth work interventions, they have frequently made strong links with other arms of the caring professions such as the police, criminal justice, training agencies, schools and

the private sector (MBF, 2003). This is partly due to the funding streams through which both interventions have worked but it seems significant that mentoring is more closely related to agencies which have traditionally had a more authoritarian role with young people than youth work or informal education.

It is unusual for a welfare initiative to have attracted the degree of public attention accorded to youth mentoring. This can be partly explained by judicious marketing of the concept, the enthusiasm of advocates of the concept and the support of the government. There are clear advantages to this high public profile. Firstly, it has drawn attention to the difficulties faced by many young people who are growing up in difficult circumstances. Secondly it can have an energising effect in demonstrating to a range of people that working with young people can be worthwhile and fun. Thirdly it opens up the potential for attracting volunteers from diverse sections of the population, many of whom might previously believe they had little to offer. Finally there is great appeal to the idea of mentoring as a concept which cuts across professional boundaries and which has the capacity to reach out to individuals and communities.

On the other hand, this public face has sometimes framed mentoring as a 'quick fix' for what are agreed to be difficult and sometimes intransigent issues. It also creates highly unrealistic expectations about the

power of mentoring to act as a magic bullet to 'transform lives' and to single-handedly redress the impact of inequalities and structural constraints on sections of the youth population. Furthermore it can reinforce stereotypical assumptions about the inadequacies of young people by focusing on the individual with little reference to the wider social context.

Undoubtedly this public image of mentoring has produced a rich diversity of themes within a huge volume of projects and initiatives. However the 'pick and mix' approach has led to highly uneven approaches which have not stayed the pace.

### Differences and similarities between mentoring and befriending

The previous section focused on mentoring programmes that aim to work with vulnerable young people. It explored how many mentoring schemes host a wide range of approaches, methodologies and interpretations and how this compares with the relatively more straightforward context of befriending. This section examines connections between the concepts of mentoring and befriending and takes account of the complexity of youth mentoring and the different forms that it takes in practice.

Planned mentoring and befriending are similar in that both refer to the grafting on of an 'artificial' relationship between young people and an unrelated individual or individuals who are not part of the young person's existing social network. This new relationship between strangers is overseen by a third party, usually the co-ordinator or manager of the project whose role encompasses monitoring and assessment of the success or failure of the relationship (Dean and Goodlad, 1998).

Both approaches aim to provide elements of social support through the development of a trusting relationship in which both parties benefit. However differences in emphasis emerge about what should take place after the initial establishment of the relationship.

Rationales for both befriending and mentoring interventions commonly refer to the building up of resilience and bolstering social support for young people to deal with difficult situations (Learning and Skills, Gloucestershire, 2005; Smith, 2005). Thus the befriending element sets out to build up self esteem, to develop skills in dealing with social situations, to break down social isolation, to build relationships with adults who take an interest in the young person.

Pawson et al (2004) has suggested that befriending underpins all aspects of mentoring. He has suggested that mentoring then builds on this and combines elements of direction setting, coaching and sponsorship. However we still lack evidence on the ways in which befriending forms the basis for mentoring, and about the processes of moving from one kind of relationship to the other.

The majority of befriending and mentoring interventions examined in this study target young people who are defined as vulnerable or socially excluded with the aim of offering emotional support and breaking down isolation through the offer of social contact (Save the Children, 1994). Some of these projects work on a citywide or a relatively wide geographic area as with the Link Young Person's Project (Smith, 2005) which targets young people who have experienced mental health problems. This project includes an element of peer befriending since a number of volunteers have themselves experienced such difficulties.

Elsewhere befriending takes place with broader populations such as young people living in a neighbourhood. Here again, befriending frequently starts off by identifying a shared interest between the young person and the befriender with the intention of forming a bond through this interest (Forrest, 2002).

Befriending Network (Scotland) has outlined a horizontal continuum of befriending and mentoring which identifies these distinctive stages. The first three stages show the befriending element as central, with mentoring which is defined as objective setting becoming equally important at stage 3. This becomes the key focus at stages 4-6 such that by stage 6 'objective-setting is crucial and the volunteer and client will meet solely to achieve those objectives established at the beginning of the relationship with any social bond being incidental' (BNS, 2003:10).

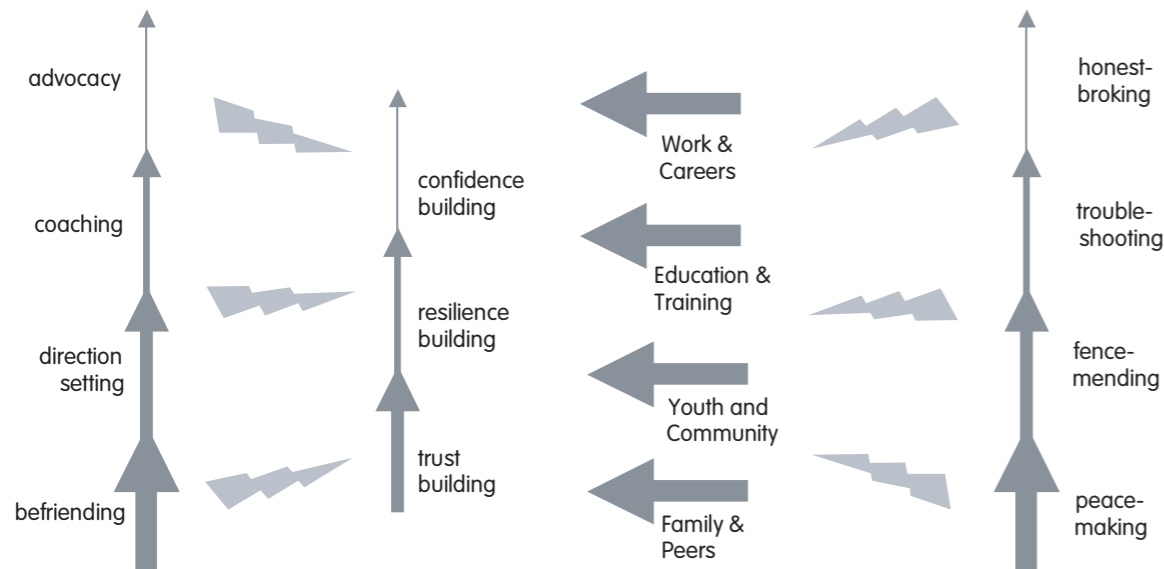
- 1 *Befriending* - the provision of informal social support from a volunteer to an isolated individual with the main objective of forming a trusting relationship, building social companionship and providing a relationship where none existed. Other outcomes may occur (boosting confidence) but not as set objectives.
- 2 *Befriending* - a more intensive befriending relationship in which additional objectives are introduced such as increasing involvement in community activities. The success of the relationship is not dependent on these objectives being achieved but they are seen as a potential benefit of befriending over time.

- 3 *Befriending/Mentoring* – the volunteer's role is to develop objectives with the client over time (e.g. increasing client's confidence to carry out activities independently). These form the basis for negotiation and review over time between the project, volunteer and client.
- 4 *Mentoring/Befriending* – the volunteer's role is to develop objectives with the client over time. Initially the role is to develop a relationship through social activities in order to establish a level of trust on which objective setting can be based. Due to the client's changing circumstances, objectives may take some time to set, and may be low-key.
- 5 *Mentoring* - is framed as entailing objectives which are set with the client at the outset of the relationship with the social relationship being less central than on the befriending elements. Timescale may be limited.
- 6 *Mentoring* – the volunteer's role is to work with the client solely on agreed objectives agreed which are clearly stated at the start. Each meeting focuses primarily on achieving the objectives, and the social relationship if achieved is incidental.

This spectrum provides a helpful illustration of distinctive elements of befriending and mentoring and specifically highlights clear parameters for befriending. However it leaves key questions unanswered: the definitions of mentoring are contentious and it gives little indication of whether emotional or behavioural objectives are set. Moreover it assumes that mentoring is essentially a directive intervention in which the mentor sets the pace albeit with the compliance of the client. This implies that mentoring/befriending is inevitably 'done to' passive

recipients rather than engaging them interactively in a joint process or set of processes. At another level it raises the question of how a strong personalised relationship interacts with the achievements of objectives relating to behavioural change for the mentee. Rarely is mention made of how such relationships may change mentors and while exploration of this question lies beyond the scope of this review, it would be helpful to have more insight into whether mentors too change their behaviour in the course of their involvement in such relationships.

Figure 1: Pathways of youth mentoring (Source: Pawson,2006).



Pawson's (2005) model (Figure 1) of the pathways of youth mentoring places successful mentoring on a continuum starting with mentoring as befriending, moving up through direction setting, coaching to sponsoring in the first column. This model places befriending at the bottom of the pile as one stage of the mentoring process but links it with both themes of resilience and trust and the wider social context. This is helpful in adding in some of the myriad ways in which mentoring is described which are not included in the BNS model explored above. Crucially he suggests that this model frames successful engagement mentoring which he argues occurs only rarely. The model very usefully offers a link with the social and educational contexts in which young people are frequently engaged.

However it focuses exclusively on mentoring as a one-to-one relationship and thus neglects other styles of mentoring. The 'firefighting' elements are viewed as typically the responsibility of the mentors and give little sense of how young people may contribute towards the resolution of the difficulties. In this respect the model could be extended to take account of positive interactions with other interventions, individuals and peers. Nevertheless it provides a useful link both between befriending and mentoring and between different theories about what constitutes mentoring.

Pawson et al's model links with that of Shiner et al (2004) which incorporates the notion of 'firefighting' as a mechanism which helps to shift the mentoring relationship from the 'mundane' business of meeting up into a more intensive form of relationship. This model is helpful in drawing attention to the fluid 'to-ing and fro-ing' of mentoring relationships over the different stages. This again reinforces the fragile nature of the relationship in addition to the underpinning of the build up of trust in the initial stages.

Rhodes (2003) described the 'classic' model of mentoring as a relationship between an experienced adult and an unrelated young person which is characterised by trust, reciprocity, challenge, support and control. However it is now clear that a range of styles of mentoring exist. Philip and Hendry (1996, 2000) developed a typology to describe the different forms of mentoring they uncovered in a study of informal mentoring processes with young people. 'Peer mentoring' and 'group mentoring' are now prominent styles that have been incorporated into mentoring programmes within the UK and it is increasingly clear that models of mentoring need to go beyond an explanation of the 'classic' one to one relationship.

Although this further complicates an already confused picture of what constitutes 'mentoring' in theory and in practice, it may help to locate mentoring as a set of processes. This may be useful in highlighting the distinctive features of mentoring.

Pawson et al (2004)'s comprehensive review of reviews of mentoring drew together published research findings from both the USA and the UK. This highly critical appraisal of the current state of youth mentoring is placed within a framework that recognises the difficulties of evaluating this 'slippery concept'. They identified a host of difficulties in evaluating mentoring practices and processes. From this review we can identify some key findings which are useful in considering the mentoring interventions identified in the following section.

- Mentoring is now established and has become a research topic in the UK with a number of large and small scale evaluations now in the public domain
- Research into mentoring has utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine important questions about outcomes/impact, processes/ programme fidelity
- The theoretical base of mentoring remains weak with a range of often conflicting evidence based on sometimes competing models of the concept, aims and methodologies
- While this research has begun to unpick dimensions of mentoring programmes, major gaps in our knowledge persist (longitudinal effects, negative impact and processes, changing behaviour, which populations are most likely to benefit/ impact of mentoring on social networks and on 'backcloth' of deprivation, isolating effects from other interventions/ measuring synergy)
- It remains an open question about what constitutes the building blocks for successful mentoring interventions
- Measurement has focused on how mentoring meets 'hard' outcomes in relation to cognitive development, behavioural change, rehabilitation from criminal careers
- Results are mixed and consistently so!

## Research into youth mentoring

### Mentoring interventions – offending and exclusion

The next section explores examples of recent research into youth mentoring. We include these with the aim of highlighting key positive and negative aspects of planned mentoring and befriending. These studies are selected since they have been rigorously planned and have undergone peer review. The interventions under examination set out to reintegrate socially excluded or marginalised young people into the mainstream, either in schools, in directing young people away from criminal activity or in assisting vulnerable young people to access resources and employment. Some of these focused on changing the behaviour and attitudes of vulnerable young people deemed to be at risk, through the intervention of an unrelated adult.

### Government led mentoring interventions – offending and exclusion

It is important to point out that caution needs to be exercised when comparing findings from studies which deploy different methodologies, aims and programmes. In addition different sections of so-called 'vulnerable' youth population were targeted by the interventions reviewed below. As discussed above, the notion of vulnerability covers a diverse group of populations for whom a 'one size fits all' approach

may be inappropriate. While mentoring may be characterised as a flexible form of intervention, it may also require to be linked with other forms of intervention or approach to meet such diverse needs. In such cases, isolating the impact of the mentoring element may be highly problematic.

The interventions discussed in this section placed emphasis on behavioural and attitudinal change, commonly in relation to behaviour in school and offending activities. Finally even studies of interventions which fall within the same programme such as Mentoring Plus (Newburn and Shiner, 2005) which encompassed 10 projects and the Youth Justice Study (St James-Roberts et al, 2005) which examined 84 mentor projects found that the programmes were implemented differently in different settings, varied in duration and in dosage. Some projects terminated before the end of the evaluation period.

Shiner and Newburn undertook a three year evaluation of the Mentoring Plus initiative run by Crime Concern and Breaking Barriers (Shiner et al, 2004; Newburn and Shiner, 2005). The 10 programmes consisted of a one-to-one mentoring intervention alongside education, training and a series of social and recreational activities and targeted disaffected young people who were deemed to be at risk of social exclusion. These programmes, known as Mentoring Plus, were based on the established Dalston Youth

Project (DYP) mentoring programme which was one of the earliest UK planned mentoring projects. DYP was well embedded within the criminal justice field, forming a model for many mentoring initiatives across the UK (Benioff, 1997).

The objectives of the study included measurement of the impact of mentoring and assessment of medium term impact. They did this by assessing levels of social engagement by the young people who participated in the scheme, levels of offending, drug use and general psychological functioning. The researchers also set out to strengthen the theoretical base for mentoring.

A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted in this multi-level study which included a longitudinal survey of 300 young people aged between twelve and nineteen while they were involved with mentoring and beyond the intervention. Additional evidence about the frequency of contact between young people and the project was collected by the projects for the researchers. The qualitative study comprised of in depth interviews with project staff, young people, mentors and referral agents and observation of the key elements of the programme. Ten mentor pairs participated in joint interviews and these formed elements of four detailed case studies.

Findings suggested that mentoring had a limited impact on the criminal activity of the young people involved. They indicate that this was not a clear goal of the structured elements of the programme and design of programmes should address this in future. The authors conclude that the 'findings do not support a widespread use of mentor programmes as a means of preventing or tackling youth crime'. However they modify this in suggesting that mentoring may be valuable as an optional form of intervention included as part of programmes designed to achieve the aims of behavioural change (Newburn and Shiner, 2005: 196).

More impact was evident in relation to training, education and work with a greater proportion of young people (from 49% to 63%) participating than before they engaged with the programme although this was uneven across the programmes. They concluded that the more structured and well organised the programme, the more likely it was to engage with young people. However they also noted that it was difficult to disentangle the impact of the mentoring from other interventions since a range of professionals were involved in working with this group of young people. Equally, isolating whether the mentoring, the plus element or the combination was significant proved difficult. The researchers also point out that non participants were no more likely to engage after the programme than before.

Those participants who sustained the mentoring relationship reported increased social confidence and skills although the impact on family relationships appeared to be unchanged. The researchers concluded that mentoring is a fragile process and it can take considerable time to build up any kind of relationship. Moving into a more intense relationship beyond the basis cycle of contacting, meeting and doing things together was a fluid, lengthy and often uncertain process. Little evidence is available on the turning points for those relationships in moving from a good natured 'acquaintance' into a working relationship valued by both partners. Accounts given by young people and by mentors in other studies have suggested that this can be a subtle process although in some cases there was a more abrupt shift which took place around an incident or event where the mentor 'proved' to be a reliable source of support (Philip et al, 2004, Rhodes and Dubois, 2006).

However it is clear that a degree of trust between the mentor and the mentee was an underpinning element of this shift in emphasis. Nevertheless such a shift did not preclude the possibility of an equally powerful move in the opposite direction leading to the termination of the relationship or, less drastically, a return to a lower level of engagement on either part.

This process was subject to what Newburn and Shiner (2005) have identified as 'firefighting'. The firefighting took place throughout the relationship and the first instance of this was often a turning point. 'Firefighting' could involve attempts to resolve problems over attendance, family or other relationships, drug related incidents or wellbeing issues. However it was essentially mentor led and there is less indication of how young people themselves negotiated such 'turning points'.

Within the programme itself the 'mentoring plus' element which included group work and other activities was highly rated by the participants, leading some to indicate that it was the combination of the two forms of intervention that was viewed as helpful. Still others felt that the mentoring was not as enjoyably or as useful as the mentoring plus component. Related to this the 'dosage' of the intervention varied considerably across projects making assessment of the impact again problematic. It was equally clear that a high degree of skill and experience was required for staff and mentors in working with challenging young people whose lives could be chaotic, unpredictable and violent, particularly in settings which were new to them.



A major issue for the evaluation team was the question of programme integrity or the level to which the intervention was similar for all participants. Programmes within the scheme experienced different levels of staff turnover usually caused by the temporary and uncertain nature of the funding for their posts. Related to this funding questions impinged on all levels of management and programme integrity. Uncertainty over funding impacted on staffing, continuity of approach and relationships with young people and overall undermined the potential for sustained work and careful planning.

The findings that mentoring had little impact on criminal activity were further reinforced by the study of 80 projects sponsored by the Youth Justice Board (St James-Roberts et al, 2005). The researchers examined the experience of 2, 956 young people in the 10-18 year age group (average age 14) across England and Wales who had offended or who were deemed to be at risk of offending. The mentoring programmes were 'competency based' and set out to teach skills that would assist young people in dealing with their environment and to improve their prospects in education and employment.

Four elements were included in the study: a database to collect project records of programme implementation and outcomes, a comparison at

baseline and outcome of mentees and a comparison group. Examination of offending statistics using HOPNC data was also undertaken before and after the intervention and a cost benefit analysis comprised the final element. Significant attrition of the sample of participants took place with half of the projects ending early and a high proportion of young people dropping out of the intervention.

The database study showed that mentoring was successful in re-integrating young people into the mainstream but that there were few improvements in behaviour and, more depressingly, that some young people involved in the schemes were more likely than the control group, to continue their offending behaviour after the intervention. However the reconviction study noted that levels of offending had declined in the year following the intervention but that there was no difference in rates between the mentored and the non-mentored young people.

More positively, the study found that the longer the duration of the programme and the more sustained the involvement of young people, the more likely they were to re-enter employment, training, and education and to have improved skills in literacy and numeracy, a finding which echoes that of Shiner et al (2005) discussed above. The cut off point was 10 months and these improvements extended to 'softer outcomes'

such as family relationships, new interests or involvement in the wider community. This suggests that level of dosage may be a crucial factor in predicting success.

The notion of mentoring as a means of assisting young people to renegotiate or develop better relationships in their social networks is one which was noted by Philip et al (2004) in the accounts given by vulnerable young people and mentors about their experiences of befriending and mentoring. This important but often overlooked aspect of mentoring could hold considerable promise for professional interventions in the social welfare field.

A further improvement was the increase in community involvement among participants. This is particularly interesting since mentoring is frequently associated with attempts to combat isolation and to support young people to develop better social contact. More data on how this community involvement was manifested could be helpful in relation to linking mentoring with the concepts of social capital explored earlier in this review. It could well be the case that the processes of engaging in a mentoring relationship can act as a catalyst for young people in renegotiating family and social relationships in the wider community.

The study also found that the schemes based within youth offending teams were most likely to be able to sustain the programme for longer periods and to foster mentoring matches. This suggests that the infrastructure of these teams provided a supportive environment in which mentoring could flourish. On the other hand this could suggest that stability of funding is significant. Taken with the findings from Shiner et al, (2005) it is clear that a high turnover of staff is frequently linked to such uncertainty.

Overall the study raises a number of questions for further research. The authors suggest that younger populations may be more amenable to these kinds of programmes and approaches than their slightly older peers. It may also suggest a need to explore a range of strategies for engaging with more disaffected and alienated sections of the youth population. This could include more integrated approaches with those working in related fields such as youth work. Alternatively it may suggest the need to investigate the potential for passing on mentoring skills to different groups of professionals.

Unsurprisingly some findings from the different components lay in conflict with each other. Both of the studies reviewed above interpreted key aspects of the programme in different ways: thus, the definition of 'successful mentoring' in the Youth Justice Board study was of two meetings between the mentor and the mentee over the duration of the study. This raises major questions about the realism of the expectations placed on both mentors and mentees to build up a meaningful relationship on such fleeting contact.

A further question related to the level of genuine voluntary participation by young people in these projects. It is clear that for some at least their involvement was tied to different and possibly more punitive options within the criminal justice system such that however subtly, mentoring was part of an imposed rather than a chosen option. Since a key element of mentoring is the voluntary commitment of the participants, this raises questions about whether this approach falls within the admittedly very broad definitions of mentoring. More examination of the circumstances and perceptions of those who dropped out of the study would have been highly illuminative in this respect. The issue of dosage demands closer investigation as do the questions which the researchers raise about the different ways in which the programmes were implemented. The issue of programme integrity was also significant in the Mentoring Plus evaluation.

A range of interventions have taken place with offenders under the auspices of the Home Office. This included a study of the 11 projects which comprised the Intensive Control and Change Programme Pilots for 18-20 year olds. These programmes targeted persistent offenders (Partridge et al, 2005). Although this scheme does not fall within the brief of this study since it was clearly a 'coercive' form of mentoring, it nevertheless highlights some interesting points. The Trailblazers scheme (Maruna et al, 2005) based in young offenders institutions worked with 15-21 year old offenders towards the end of their prison sentence with the aim of continuing the support for around nine months following release. Mentoring was one of five interventions within the overall scheme. The mentoring element was provided through in-house provision by mentoring agencies and a mix of paid and unpaid mentors participated in the project. Some difficulties were experienced in retaining volunteer mentors and it appeared that this form of mentoring demanded particular skills.

The researchers concluded that the mentoring was well received after initial uncertainty on the part of the offenders. Some evidence suggested that those offenders who had a mentor were less likely to breach their order compared to those who had not but the researchers suggest this finding is uncertain and should be treated with caution.

No statistically significant differences were detected in rates of re-offending between those who had mentors and the control group. Non Caucasian young people were more likely to drop out from mentoring and were less likely to re-offend than Caucasians overall. However the re-offenders who were mentored were likely to take part in less serious offences than those in the control group. Nevertheless the offenders viewed the mentoring as part of the punishment and this may be related to the finding from these studies that mentoring relationships did not thrive beyond the prison experience. Particular problems were also encountered in negotiating with the host services and where this was problematic the intervention itself was treated with suspicion by the prisoners. A qualitative study of a similar intervention in Feltham YOI (Wilson, 2005) provided a highly positive account given by participants and highlighted how the introduction of a mentor within prison had offered opportunities to discuss more personal matters. It is clear that having someone to talk to while in prison was highly valued but it is debatable whether this could be considered as a mentoring intervention.

### Leaving care and vulnerable young people

Clayden and Stein (2005) examined the long term experiences and outcomes of mentoring for care leavers within 14 projects run by the Prince's Trust.

Care leavers form a group that has traditionally had poor outcomes in education, health and employment in adulthood. The Prince's Trust and Camelot Foundation collaborated with the National Children's Bureau to set up this network of schemes.

Both 'peer' mentoring and 'classic' mentoring were features of this intervention. The projects were based in specialist leaving care teams or had strong links with these and clear systems were in place for selection, training, support and feedback. The young people were between 15 and 23, half were young men. Many of the young people were living chaotic lives and had been through a range of care provision.

The two year study used a mix of methods including qualitative interviews with young people, mentors and project co-ordinators and a file search of a sample of records kept by the projects on the 181 mentoring relationships. The study explored mentoring on a continuum linking 'hard outcomes' such as employment, education and training at one end moving towards 'softer outcomes' such as self esteem and personal development.

The researchers found that mentoring relationships were valued by participants in offering a different kind of relationship to that on offer from other professionals and adults in their lives.

They suggested that this formed a kind of 'professional friendship' which enabled young people to confide in and relate positively to a consistent person and that this in turn added an element of consistency in their other relationships. Significantly, the more durable the relationship, the more likely were positive outcomes to be reported. Those mentoring relationships which lasted for more than a year were most likely to have achieved their original goals and to have future plans.

Over three quarters of the sample 'achieved their goals and over half achieved goals set during the project. However the researchers noted that these objectives often shifted and moved in the course of the relationships as circumstances changed. The study captures well the uneven progress of mentoring relationships and how mentors took account of this recognising that young people will move backwards as well as forwards in moving towards independence in working towards flexible and negotiated objectives. This fluidity echoes Shiner et al's (2005) finding that mentoring relationships did not progress on a linear process but were subject to continuous shifts and changes. Some confusion was evident between the role of personal advisers and the role of mentors. The plethora of professionals and others involved in the lives of young people has been a recurring theme in work with vulnerable young people.

It is important that the imposition or allocation of mentors does not add to this already confused picture.

Mentors reported uncertainty about the boundaries of the relationships. The question of the limits of mentoring and befriending is a recurring issue explored in a number of studies and reports. The notion of 'professional friendship' itself embodies some of the contradictions of developing an interpersonal relationship as an engineered process. Clearly safeguards are required as are limits to the relationship, but tensions arise in offering to respond in a flexible and approachable way to an individual and ensuring that appropriate support is on offer.

Half the relationships reported negative outcomes, including lack of engagement, missing appointments and unplanned endings. For one fifth of the sample, the mentor had withdrawn and no longer met with the young person. Overall the project was appreciated and viewed as helpful to many of those who participated and it offered an opportunity to reverse the expected linear transition to adulthood,

Young people were allowed to take steps both backwards and forwards: this is how many young people experience the transition to adulthood, but ironically, care leavers are expected to follow a clear and direct pathway to independence (Clayden and Stein, 2005)

Philip and colleagues (2004) undertook a study of three projects, two of which employed key workers for whom mentoring was part of their role and one where befriending was carried out by volunteers who were supported by a paid co-ordinator. One project provided an alternative education programme for young people who were excluded from school or who were not attending for a variety of reasons. One project provided supported tenancies with mentoring support. In the first two projects, most young people had been excluded from school, had been involved in offending and had experienced periods in local authority care. The third project was a long standing befriending project which matched volunteers to young people who were experiencing difficulties at home or in school. The age range was 10-19 year olds. Some participants were living highly chaotic lives, some were in custody for periods within the research study and others were in relatively stable settings but experiencing a range of difficulties. This study took place over two years and involved a series of interviews with young people and their mentors, with young people who had given up their mentoring relationship and with a range of stakeholders such as parents, managers and professionals.

Where mentoring was successful, young people were positive about the value of 'professional friendship' although this was a delicate process subject to constant negotiation over boundaries, confidentiality

and time. In addition there was considerable uncertainty about the ending of such relationships within all three projects.

Unsuccessful mentoring relationships were often deemed to be situations where trust had been 'betrayed' by the mentor. In some instances this was revisited and renegotiated by both parties or with the assistance of other staff in the projects, in others the relationships terminated.

Although many of those involved in the study were estranged from members of their family at some point, they frequently expressed a need to 'try again' to put such relationships on a better or more manageable footing. An important element of successful mentoring was in helping young people to come to terms with often problematic relationships within the family or social network.

Young people valued the informality and saw the relationships as 'special' to them. There was potential for reciprocity with adults sharing their own experiences and this was especially important. Overall mentoring relationships were viewed as offering an opportunity to reflect on other relationships and on their behaviour. Within this it was clear that a range of models of mentoring were in use and that keyworkers or befrienders themselves were not always the chosen mentor of the young person.

This opportunity to 'pick and mix' was highly valued by the young person.

The researchers found that the development of 'mentor rich' environments where vulnerable young people could seek out flexible relationships with others, could provide an important form of social support for young people who had previously experienced problematic relationships with family, professionals and peers. Opening up such potential is demanding for professionals and volunteers and implies a high level of training, support and planning. However it may provide a strong basis for supporting young people to take some control over their lives and in making more successful transitions. Critically, such a process can help young people to take an active perspective in reflecting on their own situation.

Kendrick et al (2005) undertook a two year evaluation of the Scottish Care Leavers Mentoring Projects for the Fostering Network. This study examined mentoring projects for young people in residential care and in contact with throughcare teams in social work or with criminal justice in the 10-23 year old age groups. The projects were funded by the Scottish Executive, charitable trusts and grant making bodies and some were located within the voluntary sector with others in local authorities. The findings from the study focus mainly on the development of policies and procedures, recruitment, training and support of

mentors and mentors were expected to supplement the work of social workers or key workers,

Within the mentoring relationship, each care leaver would be encouraged to identify realistic but challenging personal goals and their mentor would provide support and guidance to enable them to achieve these (Kendrick et al, 2005:10)

The authors indicate that feedback from young people was limited due to resource constraints on both the projects and the research. Only two interviews were undertaken with young people and these were conducted by the fostering network co-ordinator who was later interviewed for the study which raises some questions about the methodology for the evaluation.

The researchers found that the infrastructure for the projects was highly variable, ownership was uncertain, support from other practitioners was highly uneven and a significant number of young people were dubious about the value of the intervention. Few mentoring relationships were well established by the end of the evaluation, since the recruitment training and matching processes took much longer than had been anticipated. Although clear systems had been devised, these were rarely adhered to, with agreements and review meetings being particular casualties. The researchers concluded that the emphasis placed by the managers in the Scottish

Fostering Network on recruitment, training and support of mentors left little space to promote the scheme to young people. They also highlight how the embedding of new projects is a highly labour and time intensive process and one which is rarely connected with the timescales for evaluation. This finding was reinforced in a number of studies such as that by Sarno et al (2000) in their evaluation of mentoring in probation employment schemes for the Home Office. Since young people's voices are largely absent from the evaluation, it is difficult to assess the value or otherwise that they placed on this form of intervention.

Clearly the lack of support from practitioners who were also dealing with the young people and the uneven infrastructure influenced the development of the projects. This also restricted the potential of the evaluators to assess the schemes since only one project was in a position to be evaluated in depth with a further two providing contextual information. One project did not start and four did not establish mentoring relationships within the timescale of the evaluation.

Nevertheless the report does reveal that the five week training and the support offered by the Fostering Network was highly valued by mentors but the realities of managing the mentoring projects was more complex, demanding and time consuming than had been anticipated. In line with the findings from the

study by Clayden and Stein (2005) they concluded that mentoring relationships had to take account of the fast pace of change and fluidity in the lives of the young people. Again the 'befriending' aspects were highly prized and the benefits of a 'flexible' relationship are strongly reiterated.

In relation to dosage and duration of meetings, the percentage of arranged meetings taking place varied from 50% to 76%, with projects noting that this was mostly due to young people failing to attend. No formal process was in place for the co-ordinator of the project to meet with mentees but the expectation was that key workers would monitor and support young people. This raises questions about how the role of key worker and mentor interlinked or overlapped but this point is not developed. However, the absence of evidence from young people detracts somewhat from these findings.

### Younger children at risk of exclusion from school

Several studies have investigated mentoring and befriending initiatives with younger children. Findings from studies of older adolescents have suggested the potential for mentoring to intervene more successfully with younger groups. More sustained research with this group could yield significant data for the planning of mentoring interventions.

St James-Roberts and Singh (2001) focused on primary children who were living in a highly disadvantaged area of London and who were referred because of their poor behaviour in schools and who were mentored for one year. The researchers found

- improvements in the mentored group took place but these were also evident in the control group re exclusions from school, absences, progress in subjects
- Parents, mentors and mentees felt behaviour had improved (but no comparison group so could not establish if this was due to the intervention)
- The project was strong on building relationships with primary school children but little improvement was noted on school progress and solution focused work.

Questions arising from the study include the intensity of the input – was a year long enough to achieve results in relation to this sample of very disaffected young people?

Secondly, should mentoring programmes focus on those at the sharpest end of disaffection or is it more realistic to work with those for whom intervention may be more effective?

It is clear from studies of Big Brothers Big Sisters in the USA that those young people who made it into the scheme having been on waiting lists for some time, undergone screening and awaited matching were likely to be highly motivated, compliant and persistent. In this sense a very different population to that described by the offending projects cited in the previous section. Within the UK, Colley (2003) has vividly shown in her study of mentoring in a further education project targeting older teenagers, how very disaffected young people were unlikely to engage with the mentoring programme and that those who did were unlikely to thrive on the schemes.

Tarling et al's (2001) study of young people in the 11-14 age group who participated in the Dalston Youth Project scheme based in three schools in Hackney also found little difference in measures of behaviour or offending based on assessments by project staff and school representatives with only one fifth being deemed to have improved behaviour, self esteem and in education. The researchers also found that around half of the participants failed to engage with the project. However those who did, found it to be a highly positive experience and enjoyed the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship with an adult. From these studies it may be important to ask whether sustaining contact, however fleeting or peripheral, was in itself a success for the participants.

## Styles of mentoring

The majority of the studies examined above have focused on the 'classic' style of mentoring of a one-to-one relationship between an older adult and a young person. However it is clear that a range of styles of mentoring are deployed in informal settings and formal programmes. While e-mentoring follows the classic style albeit delivered through electronic contact, peer mentoring has offered opportunity for young people to develop their own skills and capacities as mentors.

A frequent comment from mentors is that it has offered the opportunity to use their experience of surviving difficult situations in supporting other people who are in a similar situation (Philip et al, 2004). Since peers share similar backgrounds, it is assumed that they are well placed to influence values and direction setting (Pawson, 2004: 49 quoting Frankham). Moreover peers may be more acceptable as having 'street knowledge' that adults may not have. In this way peer mentoring may offer a means of building social capital between same age young people by recognising the realities that they each experience. From an educational perspective, peer mentoring is often described as a means of counteracting negative peer pressure and a more positive approach to young people.

Peer mentoring also draws on the notion of 'helper-therapy' in which being involved as a mentor can help the 'recovery' of the mentor which has been identified in the community health field (Riessman, 1990). This in turn can reinforce the notion of mentoring as a reciprocal process in which each partner is recognised as actively contributing to the success of the interaction. At a policy level, peer education has been particularly popular in devising preventative strategies around health promotion on sexual health and drug misuse (Backett- Milburn and Watson, 2002).

However conflation between ideas of peer mentoring and peer tutoring can make this concept ever more ill defined. In some schemes, peer mentoring appears to consist of giving presentations about the mentoring project or delivering sessions on sexual health to students in local schools and appears to bear little resemblance to mentoring in its other guises. Issues of status and social distance may be influential in predicting the success of programmes: for example younger students from areas of deprivation may have more in common with an adult who has grown up in the same locality than a high achieving, middle class sixth year student who is regarded as a 'peer'.

The Upeer scheme ran in 9 London FE colleges and Sixth Form Colleges and was supported by Community Service Volunteers (Levene, 2004). The scheme targeted students at risk of not completing their studies and had a high level of success in some colleges in recruiting mentors from BME communities. In this scheme peer mentoring was 'based on the notion that mentors will be more aware of the pressures and influences on their mentees due to the similar age and part of the same community'.

### Concluding section on mentoring interventions

Mentoring appeared to offer value in being integrated with other initiatives. Thus Newburn and Shiner (2005) found that the synergy between mentoring and the mentoring plus was more productive than mentoring on its own. In many of the schemes it proved problematic to isolate the impact of mentoring from other elements of the interventions.

Similarly Philip et al (2004) found that the project co-ordinator of a befriending project was frequently called on as the 'consistent' person since she was likely to be the person who made contact with a young person when a relationship ended prematurely and who would negotiate a match with another befriender. In addition the co-ordinator was available in the office for conversation and as part of group

activities. This echoes findings from studies of mentoring in the USA (Herrera et al, 2000; Langhout, et al, 2004)

Where mentoring relationships were sustained and valued, there is evidence to suggest that these acted as a catalyst for reviewing and revisiting problematic relationships within family and social networks. All of this suggests that the role of peers, families and communities in mentoring processes demand more consideration in the analysis of mentoring interventions. Although such benefits may be less tangible than hard outcomes, they may have considerable value in building up support and resilience within communities.

In conclusion, mentoring takes place within a social context and is one of a range of social relationships, for the duration of the intervention at the very least. The underlying frameworks for mentoring need to be made explicit as do the aims and objectives and methods for the intervention. Clearly considerable value attaches to better understanding of the processes although this is inevitably complex. Isolating the impact of mentoring is equally complex and demanding and suggests that there is a need for longitudinal research which explores the changing influence of mentoring on the long term trajectories of mentees and mentors.

## Discussion

### Social dimensions of mentoring and befriending

A wealth of evidence now demonstrates that it is the 'befriending' aspects of relationships that are often highlighted in young people's accounts of successful mentoring. As we have seen from findings examined in the previous section, some evidence suggests that the development of a meaningful relationship between a mentor and a young person can assist in helping them to develop community links, improved feelings of confidence and enhance their capacity to make relationships. Thus the opportunity to have someone 'who listens to me', who has time to talk, who offers the opportunity of an informal relationship, who does not prejudge or 'treat me as a case' is one point on which most recent research is agreed. (Philip et al, 2004; Clayden and Stein, 2005). A recent SEU report reached a similar conclusion from discussions with young people who had complex needs, on their views of services in general,

they were also keen for services to see them as a person rather than a problem (SEU, 2005:71)

Within the considerable range of reviews of mentoring, an emerging consensus is that the establishment and sustaining of a mutually supportive relationship underpins other aspects such as challenging, encouraging participants to engage with learning or to confront their problems (Pawson et al, 2004, Philip, 2000, Clayden and Stein, 2005).

However some studies have suggested that while a strong relationship between partners is essential, such a supportive relationship may itself render the achievement of 'hard' outcomes problematic (Liabo et al, 2003). This point has become a focal point for the Social Exclusion Unit's consideration of mentoring,

there is a need for a balance to be struck between workers who share young people's experiences and world views and those who can help to challenge and extend them (SEU, 2005:81)

This tension between the 'push' and 'pull' underpins the rationale for mentoring schemes which focus on behavioural and attitudinal change. Clearly such 'hard outcomes' remain elusive within mentoring schemes but it may be important to examine more closely how relationships can encompass the capacity to offer both support and challenge.

Clayden and Stein found that across the schemes they studied, considerable difference in emphasis was placed on goals, with some projects focusing on 'task focused' or 'hard' outcomes, while others were more concerned with 'expressive' or 'soft' goals. Their conclusion that most young people achieved some 'positive' outcome is based on limited information available to them from records held by the projects and does not distinguish between the types.

Colley's (2003) analysis of 'engagement mentoring' examined the contradictions inherent in 'coercive mentoring' where young people and mentors are pushed into an agenda which they are unable to negotiate. Colley suggested that far from supporting young people to tackle the difficulties that face them, youth mentoring schemes may undermine such attempts and further exclude sections of the youth population. She concluded that there is a need to analyse mentoring within the wider social and political context in which young people are making their transitions to adulthood.

Partners in both befriending and mentoring relationship sometimes live in very different social worlds with different family and social networks, different expectations, and social status which can lend an element of 'social distance' between the two,

particularly at the outset (Philip et al, 2004). This social distance can be both helpful (in opening up windows on different social worlds, offering potential to move on) and inhibiting (no shared experience, too removed from each other's reality) in building and sustaining the relationship. Barnes and Momen (2005) attribute some of the difficulties in the *Young Men's Initiative* for young male refugees and asylum seekers to the 'yawning' social distance between partners. However this area has not been adequately researched and while some evidence suggests that this notion of social distance may be less problematic when the partners have engaged, we know little about how this has led relationships to fail (Philip, 2004; Pawson et al, 2004).

Some mentoring interventions set out to minimise such social distance by linking young people with volunteers from local communities, from similar backgrounds or who have undergone similar experiences. Some research evidence suggests that young people welcome the opportunity to bond with people who have experienced similar backgrounds to themselves (Philip et al, 2004, Clayden and Stein, 2005). In Philip's study for example, the payment of mentors was anticipated by the researchers to increase social distance between young people and their mentors.

However they found that, young people viewed this in a positive light since they valued the workers for having survived similar experiences and for having developed their expertise and retaining an understanding of the realities of growing up in difficult circumstances.

Recruitment from local or neighbourhood communities can be highly problematic. Firstly the notion of community is itself often poorly understood and blanket appeals to community while sounding positive, may in fact have negative connotations for those involved. Alongside this, the social capital within especially fragmented communities may be undermined by descriptions of them as 'sink estates' and areas of deprivation. This may also inhibit potential volunteers from putting themselves forward unless strenuous efforts are made to place value on the skills and capacities inherent within such communities (Fahmy, 2006). Within one neighbourhood a wide range of communities can exist, some of which are in conflict with each other and recruiting from one may alienate potential mentors and mentees from another. Potential mentors may also experience anxiety that past misdemeanors may result in their rejection by schemes.

Care needs to be taken in planning and developing community based work on this model if existing stigma is not to be reinforced. One scheme which aimed to build on community groups was the *Young Men's Initiative* which undertook outreach work in local hostels and hotels in the area to recruit young people to the project. This scheme offered a flexible approach which equated befriending with 'buddying' and described the intervention as, in contrast to a mentoring relationship, the buddying role was envisaged as offering an informal 'buddying relationship' (Barnes and Momen, 2005:17. However they also felt that where it was most successful was in offering an opportunity to practice conversational English, in offering a temporary social network and a means of developing their own support networks rather than providing a role model. Nevertheless overall the evaluators concluded that the heavy load the project imposed on development workers was unsustainable.

Clearly schemes have identified difficulties in recruiting and retaining particular groups of mentors: male mentors are highly sought after but with a few exceptions, have proved elusive. Their absence is even more evident in befriending projects leading some commentators to note that the identification with caring roles may inhibit some men.

Others have suggested that recent tabloid campaigns have discouraged men from volunteering for work with young people since they fear being identified as having sexual motives.

The need for extensive and sustained training of volunteers is well recognised by mentoring networks and many projects. However much of this focuses for good reason on the organisational and safety aspects with less attention paid to the skills required in working with young people and the implications of different approaches to these tasks. The trawl of 'grey literature' found a generalised appreciation and enjoyment of initial training expressed by volunteers alongside pleas for more sustained training by following the matching and early meetings. Clearly this may lie beyond the resources of many small scale interventions and there may be mileage in linking up with other forms of youth work in order to offer greater opportunities.

### Befriending and mentoring careers

Befriending and mentoring are frequently viewed by mentors as stepping stones to a career, or as a means of helping gain experience and expertise in order to qualify for training courses. A number of projects have actively built on this to offer certification for mentors and to link the mentoring to particular courses. Some 'sell' the opportunity to potential

volunteers on this basis. While this may be a worthwhile approach in many respects, it can lead to very short term relationships and commitments as mentors/befrienders move on to courses or more intensive work experience.

Mentoring and befriending is often highly attractive to students who can often commit blocks of time and who are often highly committed and enthusiastic. A number of schemes have targeted colleges as sources of potential volunteers and rely heavily on this population. However students are also a highly transient population whose schedules are often at odds with school terms and young people's timescales.

These difficulties in recruiting and retaining mentors/befrienders are highly significant for vulnerable young people who have had to deal with high numbers of professionals and others moving in and out of their lives and who may be resistant to yet another adult promising to provide support and moving on within a short timescale (Clayden and Stein, 2005). There is a clear contradiction in offering to build sustainable relationships with vulnerable young people who have borne the brunt of a series of adults moving in and out of their lives and then withdrawing the support.

Schemes which require a long term commitment from volunteers may be limited in the numbers of matches they can support, but may, in the long term, offer a more meaningful service to both sets of partners.

### Can mentoring and befriending have negative impacts?

Much more attention has been paid to positive mentoring than to failed mentoring or on whether mentoring can have a negative impact on young people. North American studies have explored this to some extent, finding that short term relationships which were defined as those lasting for less than six months, could precede referrals to mental health and evidence of a number of psychological difficulties. More understanding of the contexts is required to ascertain whether this has been the case in the UK. However it is clear that those young people who have experienced multiple placements in care or a range of professionals moving in and out of their lives with little notice, are most likely to experience difficulties in developing strong attachments. If yet another relationship in such a long line, proves to be negative, it may have serious implications.

In contrast a number of young people appear to value the opportunity to 'pick and mix' from adults who are concerned with their welfare, suggesting that dependency on one individual may be more risky than having the choice of a mentor or befriender relationship.

Do the costs and risks of mentoring outweigh the benefits for young people? It may be the case that agreeing to participate in a planned mentoring relationship opens the young person up to the 'gaze' of more professionals. For some young people and their families, involvement in mentoring may add yet another layer of complexity and could even undermine their attempts to deal with the difficulties they confront (Shucksmith, 2007). This raises question about the emphasis of many schemes on 'targeting' the vulnerable rather than developing a more universal approach in which mentoring may not convey the stigma of additional support.

Findings from some of the studies examined in the preceding sections, suggest that some of those who have had no mentoring at all fare better than those who have undergone mentoring or befriending relationships. This raises questions about the value of the mentoring intervention in comparison with other initiatives.



Where there is no difference in the rates of mentored and non mentored young people, in rates of offending behaviour, we need to examine more closely, what the realities are for all those young people. For those who are deemed to be successful, is it mentoring or is it another intervention that has led to this? It is clear that disentangling the impact of mentoring and befriending is highly problematic when the individuals are working with a range of professionals.

This may further suggest the need to explore with young people, the ways in which existing social networks may play a role in offering and in withdrawing support and in interacting with interventions.

Few genuinely longitudinal studies exist of young people's transitions into adulthood. Those which claim to be longitudinal are often of two years duration and have limited insight into long term implications of this form of intervention. The potential for harmful relationships exists and this needs to be more carefully examined in this as in other forms of intervention. Clearly the better organised schemes which have a strong infrastructure and set of standards will be more able to minimise this. However more research is required to explore dimensions of mentoring that may invite such situations to develop.

## Conclusions: a tentative model of mentoring

Existing models of mentoring are limited in explaining the theoretical underpinning for the intervention. These need to be extended and more rigorous study is required of mentoring over time to establish links between concepts such as resilience and attachment and of the potential for mentoring to generate social capital for the participants.

In this section we explore the potential of an explanatory model for youth mentoring. A number of models have already been proposed in reviews of mentoring (see for example, Pawson, 2005) or have derived from specific studies such as that offered by Sipe, (Sipe, 2005) and Rhodes (Rhodes et al, 2003) in the USA and Shiner and Newburn in the UK (Shiner et al, 2005). The model proposed here attempts to highlight the complexity of the current mentoring scene in the UK. These existing models of mentoring are limited in explaining the theoretical underpinning for the intervention and the proposed model attempts to incorporate these. Clearly more extensive and rigorous study is required of how concepts such as resilience and attachment, social capital and risk interact with mentoring themes and practices over time.

We begin by looking at a typology of mentoring forms which was evident in a sample of informal mentoring relationships. This is followed by a model which is based on the findings of this review and which attempts to categorise the range of forms which are in place in organised youth mentoring programmes.

This model derives from previous work undertaken by the authors and others in examining informal and formal mentoring styles and draws on findings from this review (Philip, 1997; Philip and Hendry, 1996; 2000). In the previous study of informal mentoring, mentors were selected by young people and the mentoring element frequently 'grew out of' existing relationships with adults. Although some of the adults, particularly those in the 'classic' form stood in some position of authority over the young person, a key element of the relationship was the opportunity to go beyond the allotted role and develop a personalised relationship. In this scenario, the aims of mentoring are established and negotiated by the partners and in this sense were essentially youth driven. Successful mentoring relationships were described as embodying qualities such as trust, mutual respect, a degree of reciprocity, challenge and support. Training for the mentoring role was not a feature although some of the mentors had undergone professional training, as for example, with those youth workers who formed the core of the 'team' mentors.



Matching was a process undertaken by the partners and some mentors could be unaware that they have been cast into a mentoring role until there is some 'critical incident' or 'life event. Evaluation of the mentoring relationship took place within the team, best friend and peer group categories by members of the group but the individual mentoring relationships were largely evaluated by the participants alone.

This earlier model is reproduced below as **Table 1** in order to highlight the range of forms of informal mentoring and to demonstrate the contrast with elements of planned or formal mentoring relationships.

**Table 1.** A typology of perceived mentoring forms\*

Mentoring Forms	Classic	Individual/Team	Best Friend	Peer Group	Long term 'risky adult'
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female	Female	Both	Both
<b>Context</b>	Home based	Youth Groups	Home based	Street	Home and street
<b>Life events</b>	Empathy Recognition of aspiration to role models	Acceptance of peer group and youth culture values	Rehearsal for action	Managing reputations Identity Lifestyle	Recognition and life crises
<b>Qualities sought/identified</b>	Advisory, guide, outsider	Mentor(s) Empathetic	Reciprocity and equality	Reciprocity and equality	Reciprocity and non conformity

\*These are not categorical but represent comparisons between groups (Philip and Hendry, 1996:194)

In relation to planned mentoring, modelling is highly problematic since there is such a diversity of aims, programmes, styles, target groups, methods, timescales and forms of relationship. Within all this, what constitutes a working mentoring relationship also remains contested with efforts at connected relationships even when successful, subject to continuing challenges and difficulties (Pawson. 2005). In addition issues such as age, gender, race and poverty all interact with planned mentoring policy and practice.

Within this it is clear that **agendas** within planned mentoring programmes, far from being set by participants, are largely devised by those responsible for managing the interventions. In the model outlined above, the successful examples were based on young peoples and their mentors' descriptions of connected or successful relationships. On the other hand, formal mentoring interventions often set out to remediate or change the behaviour, attitudes or perceptions of mentees through the medium of a planned mentoring relationship. Thus the criteria for 'successful mentoring' are established as part of the overall strategy with agenda setting as the responsibility of the project. Similarly the **aims** of the programme are often set by the managing agency although within some schemes,

scope exists for young people and their mentors to influence the direction. As we have seen elsewhere in the review, the **aims** of mentoring interventions are highly diverse and may include the following: reduction of unwanted behaviours (eg criminal activity, truanting, drug misuse), behavioural change (building resilience, self esteem, developing self efficacy, social skills, confidence), instrumental and instructional benefits (developing skills, mastering craft, becoming a peer educator, developing study skills, employability skills), expanding opportunities (middle class mores and expectations, integration into 'mainstream' community, enhancing community solidarity, re-integration into formal education) compensating for poverty and/or social exclusion. Matching, training and monitoring similarly sit as part of the responsibility of the managing body.

The following model is proposed in order to capture and categorise this complexity. It is not a dynamic model but rather a snapshot of different approaches that are in use and is drawn from evidence in this review. It is important to note that many of the elements may mesh with each other and that they are not mutually exclusive, but are compartmentalised in an attempt to highlight key aspects of the approach.

Table 2.

Mentoring Forms	(i) Compensatory	(ii) Instrumental	(iii) Expanding opportunities	(iv) Reduction of unwanted behaviours	(v) Integration into community
<b>Underlying assumptions</b>	Deficit model of yp/family	Remedy absence of or missed opportunities to build expertise	Deficit model: lack social capital and access to networks.	Disruptive/ challenging behaviour often linked to schools	Yp alienated from mainstream community – often linked with (i)
<b>Theoretical framework – (explicit or implicit)</b>	Attachment theory/ resilience/social capital (bridging)/ developmental psych	Mentoring as 'professional friendship'- Youth transitions Social support	Ecology of development Social capital and social inclusion	Cognitive behavioural therapy; resilience; social capital	Ecology of development; Attachment; resilience;
<b>Target groups (mentees)</b>	Children from single parent family; isolated yp; known family difficulties	'underachieving', disadvantaged, potentially at risk, esp young men	'underachieving' Possible school problems, poor background	NEET; substance misusers, yp in criminal justice system	Yp from marginalised groups eg minority ethnic
<b>Target groups (mentors)</b>	Male 'role models' favoured but majority women	Volunteers and sometime paid staff. Skills in key areas, ability to relate to yp	Volunteers ideally with business background/ knowledge. Complement work of paid staff	volunteers to complement work of paid staff	'community' members – often unclear which community

Table 2. Continued.

Mentoring Forms	(i) Compensatory	(ii) Instrumental	(iii) Expanding opportunities	(iv) Reduction of unwanted behaviours	(v) Integration into community
<b>Strategies</b>	Building social skills	Develop relationship via shared interest/activity	Link with individuals/agencies and young person; build skills and confidence	Confidence/ resilience, explore alternatives, challenge behaviour, advocacy	Confidence, solidarity, strengthen communities that may feel under threat
<b>Level of emotional engagement</b>	Important – befriending key element and building trust key	Relationship may develop beyond the immediate tasks – mentor determines this.	Variable – focus on developing skills. May be seen as inappropriate	Viewed as key but highly variable	Important – often aims to rebuild relationships
<b>Age groups</b>	10-25	10-25	15+	13+	Primary age-young adults
<b>Duration</b>	Ideally flexible but not less than 1 year	Ideally flexible – may be intensive rather than long term	Variable – schemes vary. Mentoring often ended if yp leaves employment scheme	Variable – may be linked to employment scheme	Variable – aim for longstanding
<b>Style</b>	Classic	Classic, peer and group	Classic e-mentoring	Classic and group	Classic, peer and group

A number of caveats are necessary in relation to this model. Firstly, although the model considers duration of the intervention it does not include the question of dosage or the extent of meetings and contact between mentors and their partners. This is an issue which requires further research in order to establish, at very crude levels, if the number of meetings, the quality of what goes on during meetings and the variety of the meetings are salient factors.

Secondly the model does not address issues of poverty, race, class and gender, all of which exert powerful influences. Thirdly, transitions may be equally important: transitions take place in a wide range of circumstances, including age, moves to independence, parenthood, employment, and are times when mentoring may be particularly salient for both mentors and mentees. Finally there is a need for further research into the interaction of mentoring processes with transitions for both mentees and mentors which again fall outwith this model. The model does not address the key question of how mentoring interacts with other forms of intervention and with networks such as families and peer groups. This point is however taken up in the recommendations.

However, the strength of the model lies in its capacity to highlight key dimensions of UK mentoring practice. It further clarifies where and how theoretical underpinnings are related to particular approaches to youth mentoring.

## Recommendations and further questions for research on mentoring and befriending

Finally we highlight key points which indicate an agenda for research on youth mentoring and befriending in the UK. These have important implications for research, policy and practice in both long term and medium term planning for future interventions that include a youth mentoring dimension.

### Recommendations for further research

- 1 Evaluation needs to be more theoretically based in order to compare approaches to disaffection and disadvantage
- 2 Practitioners and managers of schemes should have the scope to develop an understanding of current debates and discourses about young people, their development and their social contexts
- 3 Evaluation strategies and research should take account of longitudinal aspects of relationships between young people and mentors. Recognition of both short term and long terms implications could assist in planning interventions
- 4 Examination of the value and challenges faced within long term mentoring and befriending interventions is urgently required. More intensive scrutiny of befriending relationships over time may be particularly useful in identifying pointers for this
- 5 Better intelligence about which groups of young people and which circumstances are most amenable to mentoring/befriending interventions is required
- 6 Examination of the ways in which mentoring and befriending relate to other forms of intervention and other forms of support is required
- 7 Attention needs to be paid to relationships between different styles of mentoring that may be in place and which may be selected by young people
- 8 The potential for linking internal and external evaluation strategies should be explored

- 9 Examination of the ways in which mentoring and befriending relate to other forms of intervention and other forms of support within young people's social networks may yield valuable insights
- 10 Study of schemes where retention of mentors and befrienders has been successful may offer a fruitful area for exploration
- 11 Examination of examples of the resilience of young people and their families living in difficult circumstances, over time, may reveal factors which could assist in the planning of future mentoring and befriending interventions
- 12 More understanding is required of those relationships between mentors/befrienders and young people which may last over time, but which are not recognised as supportive, or meaningful
- 13 Analysis of the underlying reasons for 'failed' relationships is urgently required



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## A synthesis of published research on mentoring and befriending for The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

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