



Young People, Mentoring and Social Inclusion

Tim Newburn and Michael Shiner

Correspondence: Professor Tim Newburn, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2 2AE, UK. Email: T.Newburn@lse.ac.uk

Abstract

Mentoring is the latest in a long line of interventions with disaffected young people that is believed to hold considerable promise. However, the expansion of mentoring schemes in recent years has been based more on faith in what are perceived to be the merits of the approach rather than on robust empirical evidence that mentoring actually brings about the benefits expected of it. This paper reports the results of the largest British study of mentoring to date. Built around a longitudinal survey and depth interviews with programme workers and participants, the research sought to measure the impact of a particular group of mentoring programmes. The evidence from the study suggests that the programmes were particularly successful in increasing young people's involvement in education, training and work, but less successful in reducing offending. This is unsurprising, we argue, given that much of the core content of the programmes centred on education, training and work and contained relatively little activity focused on the avowed aim of reducing offending. Moreover the programmes were generally under-theorised, failing to provide an explicit model of how and why change was to be brought about. The danger for these and similar programmes is that they will be perceived to fail to deliver and, despite their promise, will become the latest 'silver bullet' to be talked up and then cast aside.

Keywords: disaffection, evaluation, mentoring, New Labour, youth

Mentoring

Mentoring developed as a formal response to social exclusion and social welfare problems in the United States. As one of the earliest – and now best known – mentoring programmes, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) was formally established in 1904 by Ernest Coulter, a court clerk from New York City. It is said that Coulter was influenced by a Children's Court Judge who recruited influential men to mentor delinquent boys who came before him (<http://www.bbbsa.org/about/aboutfaqs.asp>). By the 1970s and 1980s mentoring had come to be well established in the US and was undergoing a period of rapid expansion. Much like the UK in recent

years, mentoring was heralded as being of great promise and almost limitless potential. Many of the schemes that were being set up at this time focused on vulnerable young people and were underpinned by the view that some of the problems of inadequate socialization, personal dysfunction and disaffection could be offset by the support of a mentor.

As a focus for work with disaffected young people, mentoring in the UK is of rather more recent origin. Some of the best known mentoring programmes in the UK, such as the Dalston Youth Programme (DYP) and Big Brother/Big Sisters UK, were established as recently as the mid-to-late 1990s and some have drawn heavily on US experience. DYP remains the best known of the UK programmes, despite the fact that it is located in a single London borough. Rather like BBBSA in the US, it has been highly influential as a model for the development of mentoring programmes nationally. Established by Crime Concern and a number of partner agencies, DYP was designed as a creative response to problems of youth crime in Hackney. Focusing on 'at risk' young people aged between 11–18, the programme begins with a residential session attended by young people, mentors and staff. There then follows an almost year-long programme which combines mentoring with a series of sessions focusing on education and personal development (O'Sullivan, 2000; Tarling et al., 2001).

Mentoring and New Labour

Mentoring rose to prominence in the UK during the second half of the 1990s and schemes grew substantially in number with the arrival of the Labour government in 1997. A survey conducted by the National Mentoring Network in the U.K. in 1996 indicated that more than 4,000 people were acting as mentors to pupils in over 400 educational establishments, while research by the National Foundation for Educational Research identified over 70 separate mentoring schemes (Skinner and Fleming, 1999). The profile of mentoring in this country received a massive boost from the very considerable attention it was given by the New Labour government in the aftermath of the 1997 general election. In the lead-up to the election the Labour Party signalled that, once elected, it intended to make youth justice reform the centrepiece of its Home Affairs policy (Newburn, 1998).

In its 1996 consultation paper, *Tackling Youth Crime, Reforming Youth Justice* (Labour Party, 1996) Labour set out its critique of the existing youth justice system. Particular emphasis was placed on the failure to provide challenging community-based interventions for young offenders and those at risk of offending. Young offenders were to be made more personally responsible for their actions; the problems of poverty, educational failure and family dysfunction no longer usable as 'excuses' for offending and anti-social conduct. An array of new orders, including Reparation Orders and Action Plan Orders, were introduced as were a number of non-criminal orders, such as Parenting Orders and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. Responsibility for crime control was held to lie not only at the feet of the young offender or their parents, but was increasingly presented as a 'multi-disciplinary' endeavour in which the aim was to encourage *all* members of the community into contributing to the Home Office's newly established mission statement of 'building a safe, just and tolerant society'.

Of the community-based initiatives adopted by New Labour in its attempt to tackle youthful offending and anti-social behaviour, mentoring quickly became established as

one of the most popular. Like so many other New Labour initiatives, its North American origins were undoubtedly something of a selling point (Newburn, 2001). The range of locations in which mentoring was adopted by New Labour was extremely broad. One of the most significant was the New Deal initiative that focused on unemployed young people aged 18 and over. The New Deal had a number of key elements including assessment, job preparation, jobsearch, work experience and personal support. The latter was provided from two sources: a personal adviser and a mentor. In a speech on New Deal Mentoring, the then Minister for Employment, Welfare to Work and Equal Opportunities, Tessa Jowell, said (<http://www.newdeal.gov.uk/english/partners/mentoring.pdf>):

[W]e know, because young people have told us, that it is sometimes difficult for them to confide in people on some matters. This is often because they have been trying to stand on their own two feet, and also because they find it easier to talk to someone who is independent . . . Mentoring is becoming the new 'buzz' word for so many of our radical social justice programmes. If we look across government, at Sure Start, early years, learning mentors, ConneXions and the New Deal, all rely on the central contribution of mentors or advocates.

New Labour's very explicit concern with social exclusion, particularly in its first term, led to numerous calls for the use of mentoring in new areas of activity. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), established soon after the 1997 election victory, recommended the use of mentoring in a number of its reports. Thus, in relation to tackling exclusion from school it suggested that the particular problem of the disproportionate rates of exclusion among African-Caribbean boys might, in part at least, be responded to through the promotion of community mentoring in minority ethnic communities (SEU, 1998b). Similarly, the Policy Action Team on Rough Sleepers suggested that mentoring could potentially have a major impact in helping overcome the social isolation experienced by the homeless (SEU, 1998a).

Other reports from the SEU, including those on reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners (SEU, 2002), the PAT on Young People (SEU, 2000), and on neighbourhood renewal (using mentoring to support young entrepreneurs) (SEU, 2001) also made positive recommendations about the potential role of mentoring.

The other very significant area in which mentoring took off in the late-1990s was within youth justice. In particular, the newly-established Youth Justice Board issued guidelines for mentoring with young offenders in the aftermath of the passage of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and subsequently used its financial muscle to stimulate considerable activity in this area. By 2000, the Board had funded almost 100 mentoring schemes. In addition, the Home Office became a significant funder of local mentoring programmes via a capital grants scheme.

Despite its increasing popularity, mentoring continues to be associated with a number of difficulties. There is, for example, a degree of ambiguity about what precisely is meant by mentoring. Definition of this approach is complicated by the fact that, as a set of practices, mentoring varies markedly and may be held to cover at least one or more of the following: facilitating, coaching, buddying, befriending, counselling, tutoring, teaching, life-styling and role-modelling (Philip, 1999; Clutterbuck, 2002).

Definitional problems create some difficulty in assessing the value of such approaches and there is little empirical evidence as to the effectiveness of mentoring in reducing disaffection or of benefits to participants in other ways – be they young people or the mentors. Research on mentoring is relatively scarce and the few rigorous studies that have been carried out are of a small number of large-scale programmes in North America. Evaluation in the UK has generally been absent, or when present has been slight. The most thorough review of the international research evidence conducted by Sherman et al. (1997) for the National Institute of Justice in Washington DC found that community-based mentoring programmes could, at best, only be described as ‘promising’. Having reviewed all the evidence, they concluded:

Even with the encouraging findings from the most recent controlled test of community mentoring, there is too little information for adequate policymaking. The priority is for more research, not more unevaluated programs. The danger of doing harm is far too great to promote and fund mentoring on a broad scale without carefully controlled evaluations.

In reality, therefore, much of the expansion of interest in mentoring, and the financial investment made in it by bodies like the Youth Justice Board and the Home Office has primarily been an act of faith. It was against this background that the research reported here – a large-scale evaluation of a set of programmes called Mentoring Plus – was conducted.

Mentoring Plus

The mentoring projects were based on the widely acclaimed and award winning Dalston Youth Project (DYP). Established in 1994 by Crime Concern, DYP was one of the first formal mentoring programmes to be established in the UK and is widely considered to have been a successful and pioneering project (Benioff, 1997). DYP targets disaffected young people and seeks to build their basic education, employment skills and confidence through a one-to-one mentoring relationship with an adult volunteer drawn from the local community and a structured education and careers programme. Within two years of being established DYP had been identified by the Audit Commission as an example of good practice (Audit Commission, 1996) and a period of expansion followed as Crime Concern set up a series of new projects, known as Mentoring Plus, based on the DYP model. By 2000, projects had been established in eight London boroughs, Manchester, and Bath and North East Somerset. These projects aimed to: reduce youth crime and other at-risk behaviour; help at-risk young people back into education, training and employment; and, enable community members to get involved in solving community problems through volunteering (Crime Concern, undated).

The projects recruit young people (aged between 15 and 19 years) twice a year onto cycles spaced six months apart, usually in the autumn and then again in the spring. Following the design of DYP, they offer mentoring alongside an education/training component. This ‘Plus’ element of the programme covers issues such as literacy, numeracy and basic life-skills (e.g. job search and interview skills) and aims to provide the young people with the complementary practical life skills and educational/training opportunities needed to support their new personal goals. Each programme runs for

10 to 12 months and typically start with a three-day residential which aims to build trust between young people and mentors through a mixture of physical outdoor activities and indoor sessions. At the end of the residential period young people are matched with volunteer mentors, whom they are expected to meet once a week for the duration of the programme. The aim of the mentoring component of the programme is to provide positive and supportive role-models to young people who have previously experienced difficult relationships with adults. Mentors are trained to help young people work towards their new personal objectives and may also act as ‘outreach workers’ linking individuals with local services that they would otherwise fail to access.

Young people are recruited by the projects in several ways, the most common being referral from statutory and community agencies and, less frequently, through outreach work in local communities and youth clubs or via friends and or family members. Young people are free to decline to become involved and, similarly, the projects may reject referrals they deem to be inappropriate although this rarely occurs in practice.¹

Methodology

The evaluation was built around a longitudinal survey of a large cohort of young people who participated in the Mentoring Plus programme. These young people were recruited to the cohort as they joined the programme and completed three questionnaires during the evaluation: one as they joined the programme, one as the programme came to an end (the 12-month follow-up), and another six months later (the 18-month follow-up). The surveys were augmented by quantitative information collected directly from the programmes, and by a substantial qualitative component – depth interviews were conducted with project staff, mentors, young people and referral agents and detailed observations were made of the key elements of the programme.

One of the key issues facing the evaluation was how to measure success. Put simply, how could we attribute any changes that were observed in the young people to the programmes? To provide the basis for rigorous assessment a series of comparisons were built into the design of the study. First, 10 programmes were included in the evaluation and this offered an opportunity for partial validation as it meant that we could compare outcomes for individuals passing through different programmes. Second, we sought to recruit a comparison group from applicants who initially expressed interest but, for differing reasons, decided not to participate in the programme. The comparison group was to be recruited at the same time as the main cohort and we envisaged that the young people in the comparison group would complete the questionnaire on two occasions: once at the beginning of the mentoring programme and again as part of the 12-month follow-up.

In total, 378 young people were recruited to the cohort group and 172 were recruited to the comparison group. In the event, the comparison group was made up primarily of young people who expressed an interest in the programme but did not, for whatever reason, go on to participate in it. In a small number of cases all applicants were included in the programme and project workers recruited members of the comparison group via visits to the schools, youth clubs and YOTs with which they worked (32 young people were recruited to the comparison group in this way).

Previous longitudinal research has not found it easy to maintain contact with ‘at risk’ young people (see for example, Hagell and Newburn, 1994). As expected, our study suffered significant levels of attrition. Half of the young people in the original cohort were successfully included in the 12-month follow-up and, of those included at this point, slightly more than half (54 per cent) were also successfully included in the 18-month follow-up. Our attempts to contact the young people in the comparison group were less successful: a third of these young people were included in the 12-month follow-up. Despite the significant rate of attrition, it is important to take account of the following points:

- There is good reason to suppose that non-response was fairly random, which would mean that the sample remained broadly representative of the wider group. The main difficulty we faced was making contact with the young people as the details we had for many of them were often out of date by the time of the follow-up. Once contact had been made very few young people refused to participate in the survey although a small number did fail to keep appointments.
- The follow-up rate varied quite markedly according to the degree to which young people had engaged in the programme. Those who engaged most actively in the programme were also the most likely to have been successfully followed up: 71 per cent of those who were highly engaged responded to the first follow-up survey and 54 per cent responded to the second follow-up survey. This meant that we could be reasonably confident about assessing the impact of the programme.
- For all analyses based on the follow-up surveys data were weighted to reflect the level of programme-engagement that was evident in the overall cohort. This was important as it guarded against overstating the possible impact of Mentoring Plus.

In addition to the surveys, depth interviews were conducted with more than 100 people who were variously involved in the programmes; including project workers (25), referral agents (20), mentors (40) and young people (36). Observations were also carried out at almost 150 project sessions and events; including recruitment events, programme activities and staff meetings. Interviews and observations were spread across the 10 programmes although there was a degree of concentration in order to allow particular attention to be focused on four case study projects.

The Young People at the Start of the Programme

Most of the young people recruited onto the Mentoring Plus programme had recently left school or were in the final few years of their compulsory education and faced important decisions about their future. The Programme was designed to ease the transition into early adulthood and one of its key aims was to help at-risk young people back into education, training and employment.

Engagement in education, training and work

Comparisons were made with the general youthful population using the Youth Lifestyles Survey (Flood-Page et al., 2000) and clearly showed that the young people

Table 1. Current status, orientation to school and qualifications (%)

	<i>Mentoring Plus cohort</i>	<i>General youthful population</i>
<i>Current status</i>		
Attending school	46	71–77
Studying at college/university	8	11–15
On a training scheme	5	1–3
Working	1	6–9
Not in education, training or work	40	3–5
<i>Truanting from school</i>		
Every week	34	4–7
Two or three days a month	18	1–2
Less often	17	12–16
Not at all	31	77–82
<i>Qualifications (17–19 year olds only)</i>		
GCSE	47	77–86
NVQ Foundation/Intermediate	17	1–4
BTEC Certificate	2	1–6
City and Guilds	13	3–8

Source: Mentoring Plus cohort (first survey) and YLS (1998/9).

Note: Figures for the general youthful population are confidence intervals based on the 1998/9 YLS adjusted to reflect the age and sex structure of the Mentoring Plus cohort.

who joined the Mentoring Plus programme were a highly disaffected group. Two out of every five were disengaged from education, training and work, which is 10 times the rate found among the general population (Table 1). The young people on the Mentoring Plus programme were more likely than those in the general population to be on a training scheme but were much less likely to be attending school, studying at college or university or to be working. They were, in addition, much more likely to have truanted from school on a regular basis and this was reflected in the relatively high proportion who reached the school leaving age without any GCSEs.

Offending

As part of the first survey, the young people recruited onto the mentoring programme were asked whether they had ever committed a range of offences and, if so, whether they had committed them during the previous 12 months. In order that comparisons could be made with the YLS, respondents were asked whether they had:

- Written or sprayed graffiti on walls, buses, train seats, bus shelters, etc;
- Stolen anything worth more than £5;

- Taken a car, motorcycle or moped without the owner's permission, not intending to give it back;
- Driven a car, motorcycle or moped on a public road, without a licence and/or insurance;
- Driven a car, motorcycle or moped knowing that you have drunk more than the legal amount of alcohol;
- Stolen anything out of or from a car;
- Damaged or destroyed something – on purpose or recklessly – that belonged to someone else (e.g. a telephone box, car, window of a house);
- Snatched anything from a person – a purse, bag, mobile or anything else;
- Sneaked into a private house, garden or building intending to steal something;
- Bought or sold stolen goods;
- Carried a weapon such as a stick or knife to defend yourself;
- Carried a weapon such as a knife to attack other people;
- Threatened someone with a weapon or threatened to beat them up, in order to get money or other valuables from them;
- Taken part in a fight or disorder in a group or in a public place (e.g. a football ground, riot, or in the street);
- Set fire, on purpose or recklessly, to something (e.g. car, building, garage, dustbins);
- Beaten someone up (belonging to your family, or not) to such an extent that you think medical help was needed; and
- Hurt someone, on purpose, with a stick or other weapon.

At the point of joining the programme, the vast majority (93 per cent) of the young people had committed at least one of these offences at some point in their lives and most (85 per cent) had done so during the previous 12 months. On average, they had committed a total of six such offences, with four having been committed in the last year. Comparisons with the YLS showed that levels of offending within the Mentoring Plus cohort were very high (see Table 2). The young people recruited onto the programme were more than twice as likely as those in the general youthful population to have committed an offence during the previous 12 months and were between three and four-and-a-half times as likely to have committed an offence within the broad categories of violent offences, property offences, criminal damage and traffic violations.

Differences in relation to persistent and serious offending were even more marked:² the young people on the programme were nearly six times as likely as those in the general population to have offended persistently and were seven times as likely to have committed a serious offence during the previous 12 months. In view of this there can be little doubt that many of the young people recruited onto the programme were among the most prolific of young offenders.

The Impact of Mentoring

Until recently, interventions aiming to reduce youth disaffection have been surrounded by a considerable degree of pessimism. For many years, the conventional wisdom within criminology, penology, psychology and social work was that 'nothing works'. Over the last fifteen years or so, however, there has been a significant shift in thinking

Table 2. Comparative rates of offending (%)

	<i>Mentoring Plus cohort</i>	<i>General youthful population</i>
<i>Committed an offence</i>		
No, never	7	39–45
Yes – but not in last 12 months	8	17–23
Yes – in last 12 months	85	35–41
<i>Criminal damage</i>		
No, never	31	64–70
Yes – but not in last 12 months	16	15–21
Yes – in last 12 months	54	13–18
<i>Property offences</i>		
No, never	27	68–74
Yes – but not in last 12 months	14	11–15
Yes – in last 12 months	60	14–19
<i>Violent offences</i>		
No, never	22	73–78
Yes – but not in last 12 months	14	8–12
Yes – in last 12 months	64	12–17
<i>Traffic violations</i>		
No, never	50	75–81
Yes – but not in last 12 months	8	7–12
Yes – in last 12 months	42	10–15
<i>Persistent offender</i>		
No	38	87–91
Yes	62	9–13
<i>Serious offence</i>		
No, never	30	82–87
Yes – but not in last 12 months	13	5–9
Yes – in last 12 months	57	6–10

Source: Mentoring Plus cohort (first survey) and YLS (1998/9).

Note: figures for the general youthful population are confidence intervals based on the 1998/9 YLS adjusted to reflect the age and sex structure of the Mentoring Plus cohort.

as practitioners, policy-makers and academics have come to focus on 'What Works?'. It can now be argued with some confidence, that:

Across the range of evidence now bearing on this point, a number of features emerge with sufficient consistency for it now to be possible to identify ingredients of effective intervention programmes' (McGuire, 1995: 4).

Our concern here is with the impact of the mentoring programmes on two broad areas of the young people's lives: their offending behaviour and their degree of 'social inclusion'. In relation to the latter we begin by examining the impact of the schemes on the young people's involvement in education, training and work.

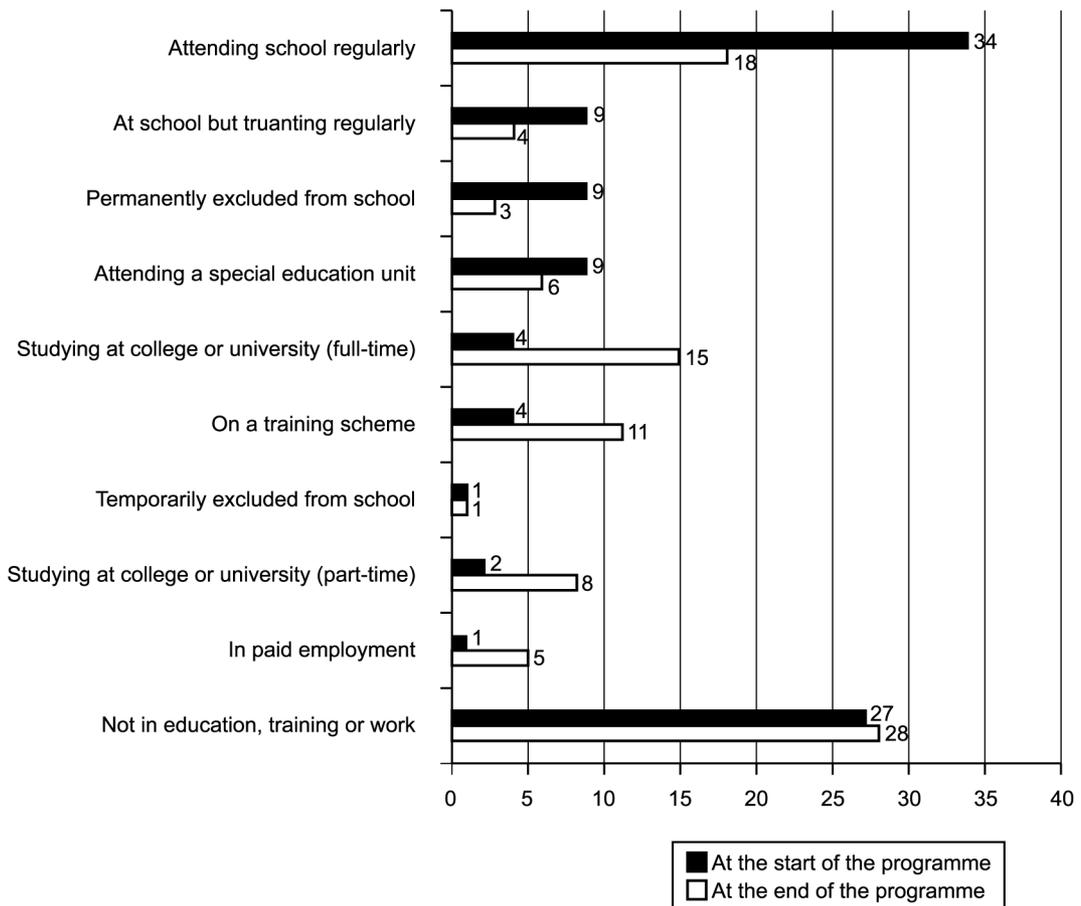
Education, training and work

Important changes were evident in the status of the young people during the year of the programme and, in many ways, these changes reflected the transition through adolescence and into early adulthood (see Figure 1). The biggest shift appeared to be from school to college/university as the proportion of young people who were, or should have been, in school almost halved, while the proportion in college/university more than tripled. Large relative increases were also evident in relation to training schemes and paid work, although the numbers involved in these activities remained fairly small.

The proportion of young people who appeared to be completely disengaged from education, training and work remained largely unchanged. However, if the young people in this category are combined with those who were truanting regularly or were excluded from school then there is evidence of some improvement (the proportion in these categories fell from 46 to 35 per cent). Further changes were evident by the time of the second, 18-month, follow-up, primarily in relation to school and paid work. The proportion of the cohort in paid work more than doubled to one in eight (13 per cent); while the proportion who were, or should have been, attending school fell to below one in four (17 per cent were at school, less than 1 per cent were temporarily excluded from school and 3 per cent were attending a special education unit). The numbers studying at college or university (18 per cent full-time and 8 per cent part-time) or on a training scheme (9 per cent) remained largely unchanged, as did the proportion that were disengaged from education, training and work (32 per cent).

The transition from school to college, training and work saw a reasonably large number of the young people on the programme secure formal qualifications. During the year they were involved in the programme one in four (27 per cent) gained GCSEs, one in twelve (8 per cent) gained an NVQ and one in twenty (5 per cent) gained a BTEC or City and Guilds qualification. During the six months following the end of the programme, a further one in seven (15 per cent) gained GCSEs, one ten (9 per cent) gained an NVQ and one in thirty three (3 per cent) gained a BTEC or City and Guilds qualification.

To assess whether any of these changes might reasonably be attributed to Mentoring Plus, the young people who participated in the programme were compared with those who had not. In terms of their main activity, programme participants and non-participants shared a broadly similar profile at the time of the first survey, although the former appeared to be somewhat more disaffected than the latter (see Table 3).



Source: Mentoring Plus cohort (original survey and first follow-up).
n = 167.

Note: The figures given here are based on members of the cohort who responded to both the original questionnaire and the first follow-up.

Figure 1. Main activity at the beginning and end of the programme (% in cohort)

There was very little difference in the proportion of these groups that were in paid work or on a training scheme, but non-participants were more likely to be attending school or a special education unit or to be studying at college or university.

As many as half (51 per cent) of the programme participants were either excluded from school, were truanting regularly or were completely disengaged from education, employment and training and this compared with less than one in three (31 per cent) non-participants.

This gap had all but closed by the end of the programme, with participants having reduced their rate of disengagement relative to non-participants through their heightened involvement in college/university, training schemes and paid work. Crucially, while the proportion of participants who were not in education, employment or training fell slightly during the course of the programme, this coincided with a quite marked increase in the proportion of non-participants who were in this position. The

Table 3. Main activity at the beginning and end of the programme by participation (%)

	<i>Beginning of programme</i>	<i>End of programme</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>Participants</i>			
Attending school/special education unit	38	21	-17
Studying at college or university	6	25	+19
On a training scheme or in paid employment	6	17	+11
At school but truanting regularly	10	5	-5
Excluded from school	11	5	-6
Not in education, employment or training	30	28	-2
	100	100	
<i>Non-Participants</i>			
Attending school/special education unit	47	38	-9
Studying at college or university	15	18	+3
On a training scheme or in paid employment	7	12	+5
At school but truanting regularly	7	1	-6
Excluded from school	4	0	-4
Not in education, employment or training	20	32	+12
	100	100	

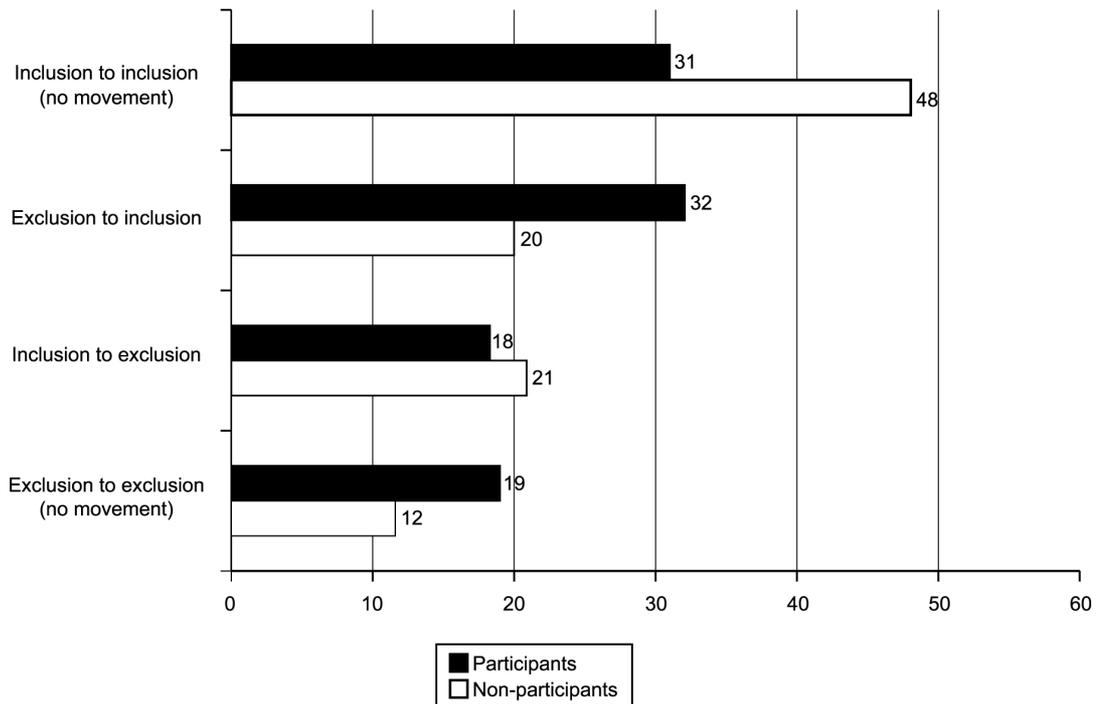
Source: Mentoring Plus cohort (original survey and first follow-up).

n = 152 (participants) 67 (non-participants).

Note: The figures given here are based on individuals who responded to both the original questionnaire and the first follow-up.

increased levels of engagement that were evident among programme participants were matched by an improved qualifications profile. At the start of the programme, participants were markedly less well qualified than non-participants but by the end of the programme this difference had all but disappeared. Among those who were due to have reached the school leaving age by the end of the programme, the proportion of participants who had passed (at least) once GCSE increased almost four fold (from 11 to 40 per cent), which was more than twice the rate of increase that was evident among non-participants (from 28 to 41 per cent).

Changes in the young people's main activity may be thought of as movements between positions of social inclusion and exclusion. For the purposes of this analysis, attending school or a special education unit, studying at college/university, training and paid work were defined as states of social inclusion while truanting regularly, school exclusion and disengagement from employment, education and training were considered to be states of social exclusion. Figure 2 shows that among non-participants there was considerable continuity in the balance between inclusion and exclusion as movements between these positions cancelled each other out (the proportion of non-participants who were in a position of inclusion fell slightly from 69 to 67 per cent). Among programme-participants, by contrast, there was a marked increase in social inclusion. Almost twice as many participants moved from positions of exclusion to inclusion as moved from positions of inclusion to exclusion. Between the start and



Source: Mentoring Plus cohort and comparison group (original survey and first follow-up).

$n = 152$ (participants), 67 (non-participants).

Note: The figures given here are based on individuals who responded to the original questionnaire and the first follow-up.

Figure 2. Movement between inclusion and exclusion (% of participants and non-participants)

end of the programme, the proportion of participants that were in a position of inclusion increased by more than a quarter (from 49 to 63 per cent). Three-fifths (59 per cent) of those who had been disengaged from education, employment and training at the outset were either attending college or university, on a training scheme or were in paid work by the time the programme came to an end.

These differences between participants and non-participants suggest that the programme had a positive effect on rates of social inclusion. There were, moreover, further indications that Mentoring Plus played an important role in bringing about the positive changes that were evident among programme-participants. Nearly three in four (73 per cent) participants who moved from a position of exclusion into a position of inclusion noted that their mentor or the Plus component had helped them in relation to education and/or work. A considerable degree of overlap was evident here as the vast majority of those who felt they had been helped by their mentor in this way also felt they had been helped by the Plus element and vice versa (76 and 83 per cent respectively).

In addition, the apparent impact of the programme varied across the projects and was greatest among those that achieved the highest level of programme-integrity (see Table 4). Programme integrity was assessed on the basis of staff turnover and the extent to which projects implemented the programme as laid out in the literature. Four

Table 4. Changing rates of inclusion among participants by programme integrity (%)

	<i>Proportion of participants in positions of inclusion . . .</i>			
	<i>At the beginning of the programme</i>	<i>At the end of the programme</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Level of programme integrity</i>				
High	46	65	+19	81
Moderate	53	71	+18	41
Low	52	52	0	30

Source: Mentoring Plus cohort (original survey and first follow-up).

Note: the figures given here are based on individuals who responded to both the original questionnaire and the first follow-up.

projects were judged to have achieved a relatively high degree of programme integrity (the main elements of the programme were implemented as planned), three were judged to have achieved a moderate degree of integrity (some of the key elements were implemented as planned) and three were judged to have achieved a low degree of integrity (elements of the programme were consistently delayed or did not occur at all). For projects with a low level of programme integrity the balance between participants' rates of inclusion and exclusion remained unchanged, but for those with a moderate or high level of integrity rates of inclusion increased by a third and two-fifths respectively.

Offending

At the start of the programme most of the young people who were recruited onto the programme had yet to reach the age at which we might expect to see substantial reductions in their offending and there was little, if any, suggestion that they were 'growing out' of crime. The vast majority had offended during the 12-months preceding the programme and many had done so persistently. Nevertheless, fairly substantial reductions in offending were evident during the lifetime of the programme.

On average, members of the cohort reported having committed only one of the listed offences during the 12-months covered by the programme which was two less than in the previous 12 months. By the end of the programme more than one in four (29 per cent) indicated that they had not offended in the previous 12-months, and this represented an increase of almost two-thirds compared with the start of the programme (18 per cent). The vast majority of those who had offended in the 12-months leading up to the programme either stopped doing so or continued at a reduced rate (30 and 43 per cent respectively). This general downturn in offending was particularly marked among members of the cohort who had offended persistently in the year before the programme as, on average, they went on to commit four fewer offence-types during the following year. As a result the number of persistent offenders fell by more than a third (from 58 to 37 per cent).

The reduced levels of offending that were evident during the lifetime of the programme were more than maintained in the six months that followed. The vast

Table 5. Offending by participation in Mentoring Plus – general measures

	<i>Offended (%)</i>		<i>Offended persistently (%)</i>		<i>Mean no. of offences</i>		<i>n</i>
	<i>Year one</i>	<i>Year two</i>	<i>Year one</i>	<i>Year two</i>	<i>Year one</i>	<i>Year two</i>	
<i>Participated in Mentoring Plus?</i>							
Yes	82	71	58	39	4.0	2.8	155
No	84	62	53	37	4.1	2.5	68

Source: Mentoring Plus cohort and comparison group (original survey and first follow-up).

Note: (a) the figures given here are based on individuals who responded to both the original questionnaire and the first follow-up; (b) Year one = 12-months prior to programme; Year two = 12-months covered by programme.

majority (83 per cent) of young people who had not offended whilst the programme was in place continued not to do so once it had come to an end. Added to this, one in three (34 per cent) of those who had committed an offence while the programme was running refrained from doing so in the following period. Furthermore, those who continued to offend did so at a relatively moderate rate, committing an average of two of the listed offences which was one less than in the previous 12 months and three less than in the 12-months before that. Consequently, while the proportion of non-offenders increased to almost one in two (45 per cent), following the end of the programme the proportion of persistent offenders fell to one in four (26 per cent).

Although these reductions in offending were consistent with the aims of Mentoring Plus, they cannot be attributed directly to the programme. Participants and non-participants showed similar levels of offending at the outset of the programme and, while fairly substantial subsequent reductions were evident among programme-participants, similar – and in some cases – more marked reductions were reported by non-participants (see Table 5).

Closer scrutiny of the changes that were apparent among programme-participants reinforced the conclusion that reductions in offending could not be attributed to the programme with any confidence. Inconsistencies were evident across the projects which could not be readily explained either by the content of the programme nor by the integrity of the implementation. Reductions in offending were evident regardless of how well the programme had been implemented, and while the design of Mentoring Plus might lead us to expect the most marked reductions in offending among participants who moved from positions of social exclusion to inclusion, no such pattern was evident. Indeed, during the course of the programme and the six months that followed, the greatest reductions were evident among those who continued to be socially excluded. It remains possible, however, that the increased rates of inclusion associated with participation in the programme will have a positive impact on levels of offending over a longer period of time. Finally, those participants who indicated that the programme had helped to tackle their offending behaviour did not show particularly marked reductions in actual offending.

Understanding the Impact of Mentoring

The reality of mentoring cannot be conveyed adequately through a 'mentoring works' or 'mentoring does not work' formula. Our study indicates that this approach has real potential as a means of working with disaffected young people, but not necessarily in the ways that some might expect. Fairly substantial changes were evident among the young people referred to Mentoring Plus during the lifetime of the programme, particularly in relation to rates of social inclusion and levels of offending.³ While these are notable findings, it should be remembered that participation in the programme was voluntary and that referrals focused on young people for whom the programme was thought to be appropriate. Many of those who were referred to Mentoring Plus identified areas of their life that they wished to change and it may be that, in this regard, they differed from other disaffected young people.

It is also important to note that only some of the changes that were evident within the cohort could be attributed to participation in the Mentoring Plus programme. Evidence of impact was strongest in relation to engagement with education, training and work. This is particularly noteworthy as it highlights the role of programme integrity. Previous research has indicated that effective programmes are those where the stated aims are directly linked to the methods used and, within Mentoring Plus, such symmetry was most apparent in relation to social inclusion. Key elements of the programme, including the literacy and numeracy classes, were specifically tailored to the aim of increasing participation in education or training. By the end of the programme, the proportion of participants who were engaged in such activities had increased substantially, while no such changes were evident among non-participants. There are, moreover, good reasons for thinking that the programme played an important part in bringing about these changes. The vast majority of participants who moved from a position of disengagement to engagement indicated that the programme had helped them in relation to education and/or work (most of them indicated that both the mentors and the Plus component had helped them in this way) and such movement was concentrated in projects which achieved a moderate or high level of programme integrity. In projects that ran into difficulty, the overall balance between engagement and disengagement remained unchanged.

While there was no clear evidence of impact in the other areas we considered, this is, perhaps, unsurprising given the design of the programme. In these other areas the methods employed by Mentoring Plus were less directly linked to its apparent aims. Tackling offending may, for instance, have been a stated aim of the programme but there was very little structured work with an explicit focus on challenging such behaviour. In so far as Mentoring Plus sought to reduce offending, it did so indirectly by reducing the barriers to social inclusion. The gains that were evident in relation to social inclusion, however, did not translate directly into reduced offending. Substantial reductions in offending were evident among programme-participants but similar reductions were evident among non-participants. It is also worth emphasizing that these changes did not mirror movements between positions of social exclusion and inclusion.

Put simply, Mentoring Plus appeared to have most impact in relation to those areas where the structured activities related directly to the aims of the programme. Thus,

seeking to increase young people's involvement in education, training and work was a clearly specified goal of the programme and provided an explicit focus for its activities. Reducing offending, by contrast, was a general aim and did not provide a specific focus for the structured elements of the programme. When set out in these terms our findings may seem unsurprising and yet their implications for practice typically remain unrealised. It is all too often the case that work with young people is under-theorized. That is to say, there is often little explicit discussion of the aims of particular programmes, other than the most banal identification of 'reductions in offending' or something similarly general. This lack of clarity is further compounded by an absence of any explicit model of change. Why is it that a particular intervention might be thought to work? And by what means will it change the behaviour of programme participants? Crucially, for all the talk of 'what works', much that is undertaken with young offenders rests on a fairly shallow theoretical base and (usually) on an even slimmer research base.

These limitations can be illustrated with reference to the Mentoring Plus programme. In large part this programme rested on a social deficit model, which sought to reverse the process of social exclusion. The way in which individuals might achieve change was less well thought through, however, and the result was something of a 'one size fits all' approach, whereby the programme was applied to all participants with little variation. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this programme, like all others, appears to have greater impact on some young people than others. While there are many reasons why this might be the case, we consider two factors to be particularly important in this regard. Firstly our study has clearly demonstrated that there is a link between impact and 'programme integrity'. Assuming that programmes are well designed, then the closer they come to matching their design, the greater the chance of having some positive impact. If little attention is paid to ensuring that service delivery is faithful to the model, or if the circumstances in which services operate undermine the ability of practitioners to deliver the programme as intended, then impact is likely to be compromised. Secondly, simply providing opportunities for change may be a *necessary* condition for achieving change but is rarely a *sufficient* condition. More specifically, particular programmes and their methods of delivery may be appropriate to some, but not all, participants. In order to develop a better understanding of individual change – leading, in time, to more nuanced models of delivery and greater impact – programmes should be based on explicit theories or hypotheses about what is believed to 'work', under what circumstances and with whom. These hypotheses can then be tested and, where appropriate, refined leading to a more fully *theorized* approach.

Conclusion

Mentoring faces an uncertain future. This is an approach that has benefited greatly from being the latest fashionable idea, but there is a danger – as with all fashions – that it will become unfashionable just as quickly (and irrationally) as it became fashionable. Unless positive outcomes can be demonstrated relatively quickly there is every possibility that policy-makers and other funders will quickly move on to the next 'silver bullet'. Under these circumstances, we must try to ensure that interventions operate in an environment of greater security so as to maximize programme integrity and to realise

their potential. We must also pay greater attention to understanding and measuring outcomes, which leads us back to the observation from Sherman and colleagues quoted earlier in the article. Their plea to government was that rather than ploughing money into yet more unevaluated and unproven programmes, more should be done to ensure an increase in carefully-controlled evaluations of existing practice. This is something with which we wholeheartedly concur. It is a sorry state of affairs that so little of the work carried out with disaffected young people is subject to rigorous assessment and evaluation. In large part this is because there is very little commitment to scientific evaluative research among politicians, policy-makers and practitioners, though it also reflects the willingness of some in the social scientific community to accept, indeed embrace, research that pays scant regard to the need for methodological rigour.

Notes

- 1 Referrals may be considered inappropriate if the young person falls outside the age range on which the projects focus, has issues which the project feels unable to deal with (e.g. serious mental health issues), or are judged to be a threat to other people in the project.
- 2 Persistent offenders were those who had committed three or more of the listed offences during the previous year. Serious offenders were those who had committed one or more of the following offences: stolen a motor vehicle without consent; snatching a purse, etc, trespassing with intent, threats/extortion, assault resulting in medical attention, hurting somebody (on purpose) with a weapon (see Flood-Page et al., 2000).
- 3 The study focused on a broader range of potential impacts than is discussed here, including self-esteem, locus of control and drug and alcohol use. There was little evidence of programme impact in these areas (see Newburn and Shiner, 2005).

References

- Audit Commission (1996) *Misspent Youth*. London: Audit Commission.
- Benioff, S. (1997) *A Second Chance: Developing Mentoring and Education Projects for Young People*. London: Dalston Youth Project/Crime Concern.
- Clutterbuck, D. R. R. B. (2002). *Mentoring and Diversity: An International Perspective*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Crime Concern (undated) *Mentoring Plus*. London: Crime Concern.
- Flood-Page, C., Campbell, S., Harrington, V. and Miller, J. (2000) *Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/1999 Youth Lifestyles Survey*. London: Home Office.
- Hagell, A. and Newburn, T. (1994) *Persistent Young Offenders*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Labour Party (1996) *Tackling Youth Crime: Reforming Youth Justice*. London: Labour Party.
- McGuire, J. (1995) *What Works: Reducing Reoffending*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Newburn, T. (1998) 'Young Offenders, Drugs and Prevention', *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 5(3): 233–44.
- Newburn, T. (2001) 'Community Safety and Policing: Some Implications of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998', in G. Hughes, E. McLaughlin and J. Muncie (eds) *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: New Directions*. London: Sage.
- Newburn, T. and Shiner, M. (2005) *Dealing with Disaffection: Young People, Mentoring and Social Inclusion*. Cullompton: Willan.
- O'Sullivan, J. (2000) 'Mentoring', *Criminal Justice Matters* 41, Autumn.

- Philip, K. (1999) *Young People and Mentoring: A Literature Review for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Sherman, L., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, J.E., Reuter, P. and Bushway, S. (1997) *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising – A Report to the United States Congress*. National Institute of Justice, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Maryland. Washington, DC: Department of Justice.
- Skinner, J. and Fleming, A. (1999) *Mentoring Socially Excluded Young People: Lessons in Practice*. Leicester: Centre for Social Action.
- Social Exclusion Unit (1998a) *Rough Sleeping*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.
- Social Exclusion Unit (1998b) *Truancy and School Exclusion*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.
- Social Exclusion Unit (2000) *A Report of Policy Action Team 12: Young People*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.
- Social Exclusion Unit (2001) *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.
- Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.
- Tarling, R., Burrows, J. and Clarke, A. (2001) *Dalston Youth Project Part II (11–14) An Evaluation*. London: Home Office.

Tim Newburn is Professor of Criminology and Social Policy and **Michael Shiner** is Senior Research Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science.