

# Youth Employment Toolkit Unwrapped for **Employers**

This resource looks at **Mentoring** as a youth employment intervention, unwrapping and translating the evidence, and pairing it with case studies and guidance for employers looking to embed mentoring into their youth employment activity.

As the **What Works Centre** for youth employment, we're committed to helping employers access the best available evidence on interventions that deliver good jobs for young people, helping to address key issues that employers face such as a competition for talent and a tight labour market. Our **Youth Employment Toolkit** presents data from high-quality, international research showing how likely it is that a particular intervention caused a positive change in employment outcomes (whether it 'worked'), including where that is specific to marginalised young people.

Our resources aim to cut through the complexity of the evidence and data, dissecting and bringing to life what we know about the impact and quality of interventions in the Youth Employment Toolkit.

Our goal is to support employers to proactively invest in activity that is more likely to be effective and have a positive impact both for the employer and for the young person. Through this series of resources, we provide guidance for employers looking to start or refine their journey towards better supporting young people from marginalised backgrounds to gain and sustain good work.



### You can explore mentoring in more detail on our website, where you'll find:

- Case studies from employers who have delivered mentoring programmes.
- Webinars with young people, experts from across the youth employment sector, and employers.
- Additional resources from the Toolkit Unwrapped series for employers.

This resource looks at **Mentoring** and next in the series will focus on **basic skills and life skills**.

For more information on Youth Futures Foundation and our Youth Employment Toolkit, please head to the back page of this resource where you will also find links to accessible versions of this resource.

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

**Mentoring is a form of one-to-one support, which, in some cases, aims to improve employment prospects for young people. Mentoring can help young people to set and achieve goals, overcome barriers to work and learning, and/or access guidance and support that will help them to engage with other interventions. The help is provided through regular meetings with a designated mentor. The mentor provides support, motivation and feedback on a one-to-one basis, within a formal framework that is designed to help young people achieve positive outcomes.**

Mentoring is a common element in youth employment interventions that seek to support young people through transitions in education and work, or to re-engage them in employment and learning.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTORING AND COACHING?

**The terms 'mentoring' and 'coaching' are often used interchangeably as there are similarities in tools and approaches:**

- **Tools** – Both use questions, reflection, active listening and discussions of challenges, and may also use guided or structured activities.
- **Relationship building** – Both rely on a relationship of mutual trust and respect.
- **Timeframe** – This can either be set, with a prescribed schedule or number of sessions – such as once a fortnight for three months – or it can be more open-ended and flexible.

**There are also some differences:**

Mentoring:

- Can be broadly focused on employment - such as preparing to enter work or developing at work - or can address employment in the wider context of a young person's life as part of a programme.
- Is often more directive, with mentors offering advice and practical help, sharing relevant experiences, and acting as role models.
- Typically lasts longer, for up to a year or more in some instances.

Coaching:

- Can have a shorter, defined period of delivery, for example 3-6 months.
- Is more collaborative in identifying goals, rather than offering direct advice.
- Typically has a more focused remit, such as building a strategy to achieve a specific professional goal.

## WHO DELIVERS MENTORING?

Mentors are often volunteers, although they may have more than one role in relation to the young people they mentor within a youth employment intervention. For example, a mentor may be a colleague in the workplace where a young person undertakes on-the-job training. Evidence suggests that working with mentors in paid positions may make it easier for a wider range of people to become mentors, making it easier to make better matches between mentors and mentees.

Mentoring has a low but positive direct impact on youth employment outcomes when delivered as a component of a wider programme.

## WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY: KEY FINDINGS

Although mentoring is widely included in many youth employment programmes, there are relatively few robust evaluations where getting a young person into employment is the main goal of the mentoring programme.

This is because mentoring is often part of programmes in which getting a job is only one of a range of goals for young people. For example, programme aims may include reducing involvement in crime or violence, building engagement in learning, personal and social development, and preparation for independent living.

Overall, the key findings are that:

1. Mentoring has **a low but positive direct impact on youth employment outcomes** when delivered as a component of a wider programme.
2. Mentoring has **positive impacts on outcomes that support youth employment** including school attainment, reduction in youth offending and involvement in violent crime, and some behavioural and mental health outcomes.

➔ You can explore the full evidence on both mentoring and coaching in full by visiting our [Youth Employment Toolkit](#).

## SPOTLIGHTING: MENTORING AT SCHOOL AGE

**Building Futures is an evaluation programme, designed to help young people aged 13-16 who are at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET) after they complete compulsory education. It will develop and test a package of targeted one-to-one support and grow evidence of what works.**

The programme is informed by previous research by the Institute for Employment Studies (2020 review of youth employment interventions) looking at the risk factors associated with being NEET at age 18-25. This indicated that earlier intervention may be effective in targeting key risks including poor school attendance, exclusion and low attainment at GCSE. We know from our Youth Employment Toolkit that mentoring and coaching for young people aged 16 and over are likely to have a relatively small impact on youth employment outcomes. However, this evidence covers a wide range of

contexts and approaches, especially in terms of frequency and duration of support. Mentoring programmes for school-age young people are often very different in their approach, reach, duration and intensity, and we know relatively little about their direct impact on employment.

In the initial phase of Building Futures, we will therefore test, iterate and refine the core delivery model, working with a relatively small group of schools and young people. This 'test & learn' approach will help to identify the important elements of mentoring needed to provide effective support for young people and that are most likely to lead to positive employment outcomes.

In total, the programme will support at least 5,000 young people between 2024 and 2029, with evaluation continuing until 2033. Building Futures will be rigorously evaluated in a robust trial, which will add more to the evidence base on mentoring and provide more actionable insights for employers who work closely with schools.

You can [sign up to our newsletter](#) to keep up to date with news about Building Futures and our other programmes.



### Building Futures

Building Futures is a £15m programme to support young people aged 13-16 at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET).

youth  
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FOUNDATION

## MEET THE GRANTEE Who are we funding?



**Drive Forward Foundation supports care-experienced young people to achieve their full potential through sustainable and fulfilling employment.**

We are evaluating Drive Forward Foundation's model to build our understanding of what works. So far, they have supported over 230 care leavers aged 16-24 across Greater London between 2021-2023 to benefit from the Supporting Care Leavers into Employment programme (SCLiE), which includes holistic wraparound support on issues including career guidance and job search, housing, benefits and signposting to other agencies/support.

Drive Forward Foundation works closely with corporate partners, such as John Lewis, Thames Water and the NHS, to provide professional mentoring, pairing young people with mentors across sectors, sharing their networks and supporting the young person as they transition into the world of work. Mentors meet with their mentee every week to provide professional advice and guidance.

Stephen, one of Drive Forward's corporate mentors, has lived experience of the care system and understands the difference that positive relationships can make to a young person's life. Reflecting on his role, he shares:

***"When you come through more difficult backgrounds, you always have that imposter syndrome and feel that you're not as good as everybody else. And the vast majority of what we end up doing [as mentors] is really reframing our mentee's questions. They're the ones who have the answers. It's been lovely watching them thrive and grow and reach objectives."***

In September 2023, we continued our support of our support of Drive Forward, enabling them to work with one of our evaluators, King's College London, through the planning and mobilisation stages towards, hopefully, a full impact evaluation.



To find out more about Drive Forward Foundation's work and see how your employer could get involved in mentoring, visit their website: [www.driveforwardfoundation.org](http://www.driveforwardfoundation.org)





## EMPLOYER CASE STUDY SNAPSHOT CLARION HOUSING GROUP

### Using mentoring to support care-experienced young people as they transition into independent living and employment



CLARION  
HOUSING GROUP

#### What sort of support does Clarion Housing offer care leavers?

In March 2023, Clarion Housing signed the Care Leavers Covenant to show our commitment to supporting young people who have experienced care. In addition to the Covenant, we set up Hometruths House, a programme that provides care leavers with specialist job and financial advice, guaranteed job interviews, and practical help such as setting up new household bills for utilities and council tax. We try to put this support in place from the beginning, when residents are setting up house to avoid them getting into rent arrears.

As an organisation, we want to communicate and engage with our residents in a way that shows respect, insight and understanding. This is particularly important for housing officers and tenancy sustainment officers who work directly with residents. Over the past year, we have worked with Break, a care leavers charity, to train all staff who work with residents who are care leavers.

Most recently, **we set up a mentoring programme specifically for care leavers.** We now have a team of trained mentors, and we are exploring how best to engage care leavers who could benefit from this support.

#### What pathways into jobs do you offer?

Last year we recruited roles for around 100 different sectors including teaching assistants, medical practice staff and procurement services. But it would be fair to say that the majority of our placements are in the housing industry, mainly in construction, finance and administration roles.

We recruit about 150 apprentices every year who are mainly young people aged 16-25, along with a smaller cohort of people in older age groups.

#### Tell us about your mentoring offering for people who are on your employment programmes.

As an accredited mentoring provider, we recruit and train our mentors ourselves. Staff who want to become mentors take part in a package of training to find out more about the expectations and commitments of a mentor, and about the approach we take. Clarion Futures

encourages mentees to lead their own learning, rather than have the mentor lead.

We **check in with mentors and mentees on a quarterly basis** to find out whether the work is on track, and that those involved are finding the relationship healthy. All those in the programme come together at an annual event we call Mentors Unwrapped. They share challenging experiences they may have had and work through any specific areas that they want to discuss.

Matching is based on a couple of factors. One is about the level of mentoring the mentor wants to give and that the mentee wants, using a seven-point scale. A second consideration is geographic proximity. Clarion Housing Group is a national organisation so if we can find two people in, say, Manchester who can meet up in person, that's preferable to having to meet online. We try to avoid placing mentors with a mentee doing a placement or apprenticeship in the same department, so that people get the chance to mix with a member of staff outside their area of the business.

Over the years we have trained 174 staff in mentoring, and on the whole it has been a successful approach.

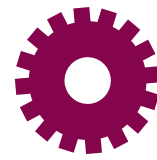
One of the most striking observations from our mentors is the **insight it gives them into cultural diversity.** The mentors have talked about how mentoring someone from another team with a different cultural background gave them a fresh experience that they do not often get in the workplace. This has been flagged as one of the key benefits of being in the mentoring programme.

#### What markers of success can you tell us about, which could be attributed to the mentoring on offer?

Our apprenticeship completion rates are around 92 percent, against an average completion rate of 58 percent.

→ To read the full version of this case study with Alex, Hannah and Ceri from the Clarion Housing Group, **please visit our website.** →





## WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

Here are our top, evidence-based considerations for employers in making your mentoring offer impactful, accessible and inclusive for young people from marginalised backgrounds.

### 1. Sufficient resources

Descriptions of mentoring note the importance of having sufficient resources to match programme ambitions.

Think about:

- How a mentoring programme delivery partner demonstrates that they have sufficient resource to deliver high-quality programme design, mentor recruitment and ongoing support for mentors and mentees.
- How the programme or service will be funded – some mentoring programme partners may rely on corporate sponsorship to provide this service, so employers should consider this alongside the dedication of time.
- How managers will allow sufficient time for staff mentors to spend with young people and to meet programme goals. This may differ for each mentoring partnership.
- How the evidence suggests that longer programmes, which last over six months, tend to allow stronger relationships to develop, so ensuring that mentors are committed in the long-term is vital.

### 2. Matching of mentors to mentees

The literature on mentoring suggests that the quality of interactions and of the 'match' between mentors and mentees is important.

Think about:

- Demographic similarities, such as gender, class or ethnic background, and living in the same area or a similar kind of area. Shared interests, background, and cultural sensitivities may also be important.
- Similarities in skills and lived experiences, including experience of the kinds of challenges that young people face and of overcoming these.

- Relevant professional or educational experience, for example, people who have worked in different kinds of supportive roles with young people or who are qualified in a certain professional field which matches the mentee's goals.
- Mentors who have the 'cultural competence' or developed skills in understanding social differences to communicate effectively with young people from the groups that can benefit from the intervention, offering a 'bridge' between different kinds of experience.
- Enabling mentors to take part within their paid hours at work. This can increase the diversity of mentors and facilitate good matches between mentor and mentee, taking the onus off staff who would find it difficult to volunteer their own time to be take part in mentoring.

### 3. Training and ongoing support for mentors

Many programmes provide training for mentors, which should be delivered by a specialist mentoring organisation. This should include best practice for mentors in supporting young people such as learning how to navigate boundaries within the mentoring relationship, dealing with safeguarding issues, and how and when to refer young people to other services (for example, to get support with mental or physical health, housing, or other needs).





Where programmes rely on a particular approach (e.g., 'person-centred' mentoring or trauma-informed approaches), or are targeting young people with additional needs, this will require either additional training, or mentors with specialised skills and experience, not a volunteering approach. Ongoing supervision of mentors can support consistency and good practice, as well as allowing mentors and mentees to identify concerns and issues.

#### 4. Individualisation with a clear framework and programme goals

Many mentoring programmes are designed to allow a high degree of flexibility and personalisation to the goals and circumstances of individual mentees, within a robust framework that limits risks and maximises impact. Programmes should have session plans, common outcomes frameworks, or frameworks for assessing and monitoring quality.

#### 5. Accessible and appropriate delivery settings

**The literature presents mixed evidence for how different formats facilitate the mentoring relationship.**

For example:

- Remote contact (online and/or by phone) can make it easier for young people to keep in touch with their mentors. It can also reduce the focus of sessions on factors such as disadvantage or disability, which young people may welcome. However, heavy reliance on remote contact can limit the development of strong relationships and can pose barriers for young people with limited access to tech or private space at home.
- Group mentoring can foster a bond between young people and peer relationships. However, it may also lead to an over-focus on disadvantage or difficulties. Some group settings could even reinforce negative or risky behaviours.

The location of mentoring meetings can reflect the young person's interests and daily life; some programmes include the option of meeting in a community setting, such as a café, or inviting young people into the workplace. This will need thought from the employer and delivery organisation around safeguarding and risk assessment.



The way young people experience the end of their mentoring journey is important in determining the long-term effectiveness of a programme.

Employers should refer to the delivery partner who will aim to advise on which delivery settings are most suitable for the young people on the programme, based on their needs and interests.

#### 6. Managing of the end of programme and follow-up

The way young people experience the end of their mentoring journey is important in determining the long-term effectiveness of a programme. If they part ways with their mentor or leave the programme in a way that does not meet their expectations or is not clearly communicated and well-planned, this can limit the positive impacts of mentoring. Clear communication about the end of the mentoring relationship can reduce the risks of a poor experience at this point. Careful management and communication of the mentoring graduation process can mitigate these adverse effects, but this should be managed by the delivery partner.

This might include light-touch check-ins with the mentee even after the programme has finished, but with the support and guidance of the mentoring delivery partner.



Group mentoring can foster a bond between young people and peer relationships.



## MENTORING ACTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYERS

If your company or organisation is interested in mentoring young people from marginalised backgrounds, here are some important considerations to work through before diving in:

1. **Staff lead:** Identify a member of staff to manage and be the point of contact for the mentoring programme internally.
2. **Accountability:** Ensure commitment and buy-in organisationally and at a senior level. Support from senior leaders will ensure that you have organisational strategic aims for what the mentoring will achieve, for example mentoring leads to a guaranteed interview or mentoring leads to an increase in work-readiness.
3. **Package of support:** Consider other youth employment activity to sit alongside and compliment your mentoring. This could be programmes such as apprenticeships, supported internships, or partnerships with schools and colleges. Find out more about these youth employment activities through our Toolkit Unwrapped series.
4. **Targeted approach:** Consider whether you might target a cohort of young people, such as those with care experience or ethnically minoritised young people, those at risk of becoming NEET or currently out of employment. Use evidence and data about your local area to get an understanding of what the barriers are for those young people in gaining and retaining good quality employment.
5. **Resource commitment:** Consider the resource required from your company or organisation before committing and whether the long-term time commitment that is required of mentors is sustainable for your employees. Consider what conversations you might need to have internally with line managers and senior leaders to ensure everyone is aligned on the time commitment.
6. **Delivery partner:** Find a delivery partner to work with, either locally and/or who specialises in mentoring for young people from marginalised groups and work closely with them to recruit, train, match and upskill both the mentees and mentors.
7. **Upskill and impact measurement:** Ensure that mentors refresh their training regularly and take part in evaluation activities throughout the programme to capture and measure impact. Ensure that mentors are supported throughout the programme with peer-to-peer mentoring meetings and supervision where needed.
8. **Celebrate success:** At the end of the mentoring cycle, share the results and celebrate the achievements of the mentors and mentees across the company and externally to influence other employers.
9. **Pipeline to employment:** Consider how your mentoring is translating into actual employment opportunities for young people and is captured in your long-term talent or recruitment strategy.

## SIGNPOSTING

### Evidence

- A 2020 NESTA review of the evidence on youth mentoring, [What makes effective youth mentoring programmes?](#), includes extensive advice on how to develop programmes.
- Evidence from a 2010 [randomised trial of mentoring](#) in relation to employment and educational outcomes.
- [Lindsay et al. \(2015\)](#), in a systematic review of mentoring interventions for disabled young people, found that mentoring has a positive impact on multiple psychosocial and personal skills that could improve access to employment. The likelihood or otherwise of entry into employment was not examined in this study.
- [Rodriguez-Planas \(2014\)](#) found that, overall, rigorous studies show that mentoring has 'positive but modest' effects on some young people, with stronger impacts on social skills and on young people who experience higher levels of disadvantage and risk.

### Youth Futures Foundation's Evaluations on Mentoring

- [St Giles](#): Evaluation of Choices Programme (key findings)
- [Diana Award](#): Mentoring Programme concept test evaluation
- [1625ip Reboot](#) young person journey
- [Uprising](#) (online mentoring)

## MENTORING DELIVERY PARTNERS

**Drive Forward Foundation:** Helping young adults leaving foster or residential care to achieve their full potential with exciting and sustainable employment programmes.

**The Diana Award:** The Diana Award Mentoring Programme works with young people aged 11-18 at risk of becoming NEET.

**Uprising:** Uprising's leadership programme supports young people to become community leaders, through interactive skills sessions and workshops.

**St Giles Trust:** A national charity using real-life past experiences to provide advice, training and support to people facing challenges today.

## YOUTH FUTURES FOUNDATION

**Youth Futures Foundation** is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people.

We want to see an equitable future society where all young people have the opportunity to be in good work.

Under our Employer Strategy we want to create opportunities with employers where they recruit and retain more young people from marginalised backgrounds, ensuring equitable access to good quality jobs.

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TOOLKIT

The **Youth Employment Toolkit**, launched in July 2023, is a free, online resource for anyone seeking evidence-based guidance on policy and practice to improve youth employment outcomes. It contains summaries of rigorous literature reviews that draw together evidence from multiple evaluations of youth employment programmes in high-income countries across the globe. The Toolkit also presents information about how the interventions can be implemented, descriptions of the kinds of evidence that were used in the underlying research, and links to additional resources.

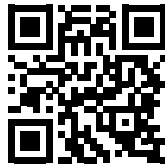
If an intervention isn't included in the Toolkit, that doesn't mean that it is not effective. It only means that it hasn't been included in the Toolkit yet. The Toolkit is a 'living' resource that we will update regularly, with additional interventions and new evidence about those that are already included.

To stay up to date with the latest news and developments from Youth Futures Foundation, [please sign up for our newsletter](#).



→ **For Accessible Versions Of This Resource** (plain text and large font), please follow [this link](#). For an audio version, we recommend using an online PDF reading tool such as Adobe Reader or Speechify. →

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## Get in touch:

Email us: [info@youthfuturesfoundation.org](mailto:info@youthfuturesfoundation.org)

For any technical queries, email: [toolkit@youthfuturesfoundation.org](mailto:toolkit@youthfuturesfoundation.org)

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