



## Intergenerational Case Study

### Project name

Glasgow Intergenerational Mentoring Network

### Lead organisation

University of Strathclyde

### Partner organisation

Glasgow City Council  
Participating schools

### Contact details

**Name:** Alastair Wilson

**Role in organisation:** Project Director

**Telephone number(s):** 0141 444 8108

**Email address:** aw.wilson@strath.ac.uk

**Web address:** <http://www.intergenerationalmentoring.com/>

**Start & end dates:** February 2011 – ongoing

### Project Overview

**Evidence of need** (*Why was it important to run this project and why intergenerational?*)

The percentage of young people from Glasgow's poorest areas that succeed in entering higher education is extremely low. A snapshot of eight typical schools confirms this; 20.9% of Glasgow school leavers enter Higher Education versus a national figure of 37.3% (SLDR, 2012). If this was further differentiated according to the most competitive HE courses these figures would further widen. This attainment gap represents a waste of young people's talent and contributes to a persistent lack of social mobility. Research within the University of Strathclyde indicates that these young people have narrow social networks with little access to others with experience of higher education, the professions or highly skilled employment.

A range of research now indicates that volunteer mentoring, particularly with supportive older adults, can have a positive impact on young people and their educational development. The project draws on volunteer adult mentors to support, challenge, and inspire these young people as they envisage and plan their futures. Mentors are drawn from a range of different channels but there is a focus on recruiting experienced, retired professionals from education, science, engineering and business with knowledge of higher education and relevant career pathways. These mentors commit to weekly or fortnightly, one-to-one sessions which provide academic, social and personal support for the young people as they prepare for their higher examinations and plan their future careers. The real value of the project comes when the mentors and young people become friends and form mutually supportive relationships that last.



**Purpose/Objectives** (*What did you hope to achieve or change? Were you trying to meet specific community needs? What were the intended aims and objectives for the younger & older generations and the community involved?*)

This project is focused on young people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Glasgow who are interested in entering higher education but who may not have access to the necessary knowledge and advice in order to realise this aspiration. There are three key aims:

1. To provide young people living in socially disadvantaged areas of Glasgow with the knowledge and support necessary for their admission to and success in higher education.
2. To expand and strengthen the social networks which young people can draw upon to enhance their personal, social and educational growth.
3. To increase the overall number of young people from participating schools in disadvantaged areas of Glasgow that progress into higher education and particularly those highly competitive degree courses that lead into the professions.
4. Providing opportunities for older adults to engage with young people and contribute to the overall project development.

**Participants** (*Who were they? How many took part? What were the age ranges? How were they recruited/involved?*)

70 young people from S5 and S6. These pupils are identified by their school as capable of taking 5 Highers in their S5 year.

55 mentors recruited from the University of Strathclyde's alumni, University of Strathclyde's Lifelong Learning Centre, other organisations and word of mouth.

**Activities/ events** (*What activities/events were organised? How often did participants meet? What did they do together? Who supported/facilitated sessions?*)

Mentors and pupils receive initial introductions to the project and are then introduced to each other. Ongoing meetings take place between the research team, mentors and pupils to support their mentoring relationships. Pupils and mentors meet together at the school during term time either weekly or fortnightly. School staff work in partnership with the research team to support the mentoring programme. Regular coffee mornings are also organised so that mentors can meet and discuss their experiences.

## **Evaluation**

***What were the outcomes/benefits for the older people?***

We have discovered the value that many of our volunteers experience in their role as mentor. Many have told us how rewarding and exciting they have found the project and how they have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know and support a young person.



***What were the outcomes/benefits for the younger people?***

At the beginning of the project we knew that young people needed very practical support in terms of their academic work and the process of applying to university. As the project has progressed, we have come to understand the value of a more mentoring based relationship offering not just support in these practical areas but, more importantly, very personal encouragement and emotional support at what can be a stressful and confusing time for young people as they plan their futures. From their mentoring relationship comes a lot of the knowledge, understanding and confidence they need to progress.

***What were the outcomes/benefits for the community?***

The mentoring programme enables young people to meet and get to know older people from outside their local communities that they would otherwise not have the opportunity to meet and get to know. As the project is now growing we are keen to look at ways to encourage a more community based dimension to the project enabling young people and mentors to meet and engage with each other within their own school and between schools creating wider networks of support.

***How did you evaluate this project/activity?***

The project is designed as research and development, which means that it is researched by the University team as it develops. This enables the project to examine how it is working and make adjustments when necessary to its overall design and to learn and act on its occasional mistakes! This approach is innovative in this area but aligned with the findings from a range of studies in the US to affirm the need for mentoring projects to involve collaboration between researchers and practitioners. To enable this, two researchers work closely with the development of the project, interviewing all participants at different times in their mentoring relationship and feeding back key issues emerging into the project development. This qualitative work is vital to evolving the practical delivery of the project. As the project grows there will be more room to look across the different schools and quantitatively measure the impact of the project across the participating schools. The numbers of young people and the types of courses they progress into will be of particular interest.

***What did and did not work, and what was the evidence? Were there any barriers?***

The project is a partnership with a research team at the University of Strathclyde and the research has so far identified that:

- Mentors provide young people with a vital source of support and information in terms of planning their future HE courses and careers. They offer career specific knowledge to which the young people have otherwise very limited access.
- This is particularly evident in the ways in which mentors have helped young people prepare for HE course application – this work has included planning work experience, UKCAT test preparation and specific training for interviews.



- Mentors are crucial in providing time and space for young people to think through new ideas and plan alternative courses as/when circumstances change throughout the school year.
- Mentors also provide young people with a valuable source of immediate practical support including subject based tutoring, study skills and exam preparation.
- The mentoring provides a useful brokering role, furthering and nurturing young people's engagement with other widening access activities in this area such as those of Focus West and Top Up programmes.
- As a result of their experience, mentees have indicated that they approach their studies differently. A number have shown the confidence needed to apply for and enter highly competitive HE courses/careers.
- Perhaps most crucially the research indicates that mentors are a source of emotional support, helping young people to address fluctuations in confidence and self-belief and encouraging them to keep focused on realising their required grades and future ambitions.

As the project develops, we hope to strengthen certain weaknesses in the project. These include providing greater support where needed to pupil and mentor relationships. We are also keen to further develop pupil involvement in the project. We have also tried to develop ways to make use of volunteers' skills, either in addition to their mentoring, or where they may struggle to mentor but have other ways in which they can contribute to the aims of the project.

### ***What changed as a result of the project?***

Over the past three years since the mentoring project has been established the number of young people in Springburn Academy seeking to engage in 5<sup>th</sup> year and to take 5 Highers has increased, as has the number entering higher education. There is strong evidence from the research work of the ways in which mentoring has supported and helped to steer young people into some of the most competitive higher education courses. This success is also reflected in the progress that has been made since the project has been established in St Paul's and St Mungo's academies over the past year.

### ***What would be done differently in the future?***

Our major achievement this past year has been to secure funding from Big Lottery of 400k to support and grow the project over the next three years. This will allow greater resources for project delivery, research and expansion which will be shaped by ongoing research/dialogue with all participants. Young people in particular will have the opportunity through the research process to express their views on what the project should do, how it should do it and what forms of activities and processes are established. We aim to develop the mentoring communities in each school and across the project. This will allow mentors to supplement face-to-face contact with pupils, allow mentors to engage with each other and learn how to develop their mentoring practice. Young people will be able to benefit from being able to contact and learn from the broader mentoring community. A new virtual dimension will facilitate this.

**Outputs** (Please detail any materials & resources created for or by this project such as: *leaflets, photographs, DVDs, toolkits, training resources, policies. Would you be happy to share these on our website and social networking sites?*)

We have a project website, a research paper is available on our initial findings and we also have a film about the mentoring project. (See <http://www.intergenerationalmentoring.com/>)



**Generations  
Working  
Together**

**Funding – Who funded this project?**

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow City Council and now the Big Lottery.

**Next steps** - *As a result of this project, are any other intergenerational activities being delivered or planned by the lead organisation or partner organisations?*

With the Big Lottery Funding, over the course of three years, young people from 7 schools will be offered the opportunity to engage in one-to-one mentoring. The project will proceed in three phases with mentoring being consolidated in an existing pilot school and expanded to two further schools in the first year, 2015. Three further schools will be introduced to the programme in the second and third years. Taking into account the phased lead-in this will mean working with approximately 450 young people and 300 mentors over the course of the three years.

**Additional Awards**

Please detail any awards your project has been involved with for example Duke of Edinburgh, ASDAN volunteering, Discovery etc.

Finalist in Scottish Education Awards 2012 (Aiming High Award)

**Your Priorities** (please describe how this project fits into your local authorities priorities)

Scottish universities are being encouraged to be creative in their attempts to secure more successful applications from young people experiencing social/economic disadvantage. Targets for these applications have been agreed between the Scottish Funding Council and individual universities and there is the possibility of financial penalties for those who do not meet these targets. As a result it appears that widening access is becoming a higher priority in the strategic plans of all HEIs. This is also reflected in the ambitions of GCC Education Services who have made addressing widening access for Glasgow pupils a key priority. This is emphasised in a recent publication by GCC on improving social mobility/widening access in which the mentoring programme was referred to and by the support offered by Maureen McKenna the Executive Director of Education at GCC and the leader of the Council's Education Committee and that of Councillor Stephen Curran, Executive Member for Education & Young People.

There is an acute need for action in Glasgow. An analysis of the data on school leavers in Scotland affirms these assertions and points towards a considerable inequality in access to higher education in particular. The Skills Development Scotland (SDS) *School Leaver Destinations Initial - Follow up 2011/12* indicates that 18% of young people leaving school and from Scotland's deprived neighbourhoods (using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, SIMD) entered higher education as opposed to 63% of those from the least deprived neighbourhoods. It is important to remember the challenge to Glasgow which contains almost half of Scotland's most deprived neighbourhoods. Drawing on the SIMD and looking at the 5% most deprived areas (the areas with the very highest concentrations of deprivation), 70 per cent of these data zones are found in Glasgow City (National share). Almost one third of Glasgow City data zones are amongst the most deprived 5% of data zones (local share). Over half of Glasgow's 5.6m population live within the most deprived 15% of areas in Scotland. GCC Education Services have identified access to the most competitive courses as of particular need for improvement in their recent paper on improving social mobility and widening access. (see <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=17580&p=0> ).



**Generations  
Working  
Together**

**National Objectives** - Does this project help contribute to any of the Scottish Governments National Strategic Objectives (please tick more than one if suitable).

- Greener Scotland
- Healthier Scotland (yes)
- Safer and Stronger Scotland
- Smarter Scotland (yes)
- Wealthier and Fairer (yes)

For more details please check out the following link:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/Strategic-Objectives>

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Date of case study: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015