



Evaluation of the Young People's Alcohol Mentoring Service

Carried out by:



March 2014

Comments about the service

Mentors are everyday Mr and Mrs who want to help young people get off the wrong road and onto the right one

Project coordinator about who the mentors are

It motivates them, gives them something to look forward to ... it makes them want to change

Mentor about the impact of the project

I was in the house by myself, doing nothing all the time, I had low moods, depressed ... I constantly cried

Mentee about what she was like before involvement with the mentor project

She had no self confidence, she wouldn't eat in public, she'd stay in but after she'd got a voluntary job and the change was massive

Mentor about her mentee

She was lovely, kind and you could talk to her

Mentee about her mentor

They often come from a background where they have no positive things, they're constantly criticized, feel bad all the time ... and we try and give them something to feel good about, to value themselves

Mentor about their role

Executive summary

Northern Learning Trust (NLT) has been providing a mentoring service in South Tyneside since 2006. This current project is aimed at young people who have alcohol use problems. It is a three-year project, starting in April 2011/12 and ending in April 2014, funded by Comic Relief. This is an evaluation of the project.

The project has been delivered to a total of 125 young people between 2011/12 and 2013/14, providing a total of 1164 mentoring hours. This is slightly higher than the original target of 120 young people over three years. Young people were referred from three main areas: young persons services (mainly the Youth Offending Service); Matrix, South Tyneside's young person's drug and alcohol service; and schools. There have been a total of 79 mentors throughout the duration of the project. Currently (March 2014) they have a total of 21 mentors.

Key findings

The evaluation makes the following key findings:

- **The service fulfilled its objectives:** it provided support to 125 young people in the areas of reducing alcohol use, improving behaviour and improving social functioning. The project was conceived as an alcohol reduction project for young people and the majority of its referrals came from relevant and appropriate services, such as the Youth Offending Service and the local drug and alcohol service. There was qualitative evidence to indicate that the project did lead to a reduction in alcohol consumption in the mentees and this was the biggest area of support provided by the mentors.
- **The project was valued by other community-based agencies:** the project became an important referral destination for organisations such as

the Youth Offending Service and Matrix. The benefits to these organisations related to the continuing support of their clients and the outcomes achieved with them.

- **The intervention changes behaviour:** this impact is of key importance to the service and is evidenced in the reports of both mentors and mentees. The changes in behaviour amongst mentees ranged from: violent and abusive to more controlled and calmer; depressed and low moods to happier; low self confidence to more secure; and isolated to sociable. The service was found to change behaviour in number of ways, including through:
 - **Building confidence:** this was a key outcome of the support that was reported by all mentees and mentors interviewed.
 - **Giving motivation:** it was reported by mentors that the weekly sessions gave something to look forward to and motivated young person.
 - **Valuing the young person:** a key function that the mentor played was valuing the young person and providing a positive influence.
 - **Providing a trusted and independent individual:** who was not connected to the mentees family or friends. The trusted adult role played by the mentor was valued by mentees.
- **There was evidence to indicate that the project impacted on alcohol use:** related to the preceding point about changing behaviour and the fact that the project was conceived as an alcohol reduction project, there was evidence from both mentor and mentee to indicate alcohol reductions. Most of the young people who were mentored had alcohol use that was characterised by binge drinking and this led to problematic behaviours including offending. By addressing issues of confidence and decision making, the project had impacts on clients' alcohol consumption patterns.

- **Some young people would engage with mentoring but not engage with other services:** it was reported that young people who have substance misuse issues may not like the stigma associated with organisations such as Matrix. There were certain mentees that only engaged with this service and no others.
- **Mentors are highly skilled at brokering relationships and moving the mentee towards goals:** the mentors employ a necessary informal approach to work with the mentees. First, they must develop a relationship with the young person and gain their trust. Then or during this process, which takes place over the first few sessions, they must determine the issues that the young person requires support with. This is itself a complex task as the mentor is not party to assessments carried out by other agencies, such as Youth Offending Service and so has no background to or knowledge of the young person; the types of issues experienced by the young person are unknown to the mentor. In addition to this, the young person often has low confidence issues and may be not be used to expressing how they feel. The mentor must employ considerable skills to not only gather the information but also to carry out the goal setting/planning; all using an informal and non-directed approach.

Conclusion

The Northern Learning Trust has built up considerable expertise in mentoring since 2006. Starting from a base in South Tyneside it has now expanded into County Durham, Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumberland. The groups that receive the interventions range from people with substance misuse problems (particularly alcohol), prisoners, the unemployed and vulnerable young people (offenders, those at risk of offending and those from disadvantaged and abusive backgrounds). NLT's mentoring and its impacts, particularly those on tackling alcohol use by young people, reducing disorder and improving mental health, have strong links to the strategic objectives of both the Police and Crime Commissioners and the Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The current mentoring project, delivered to young people who have alcohol use issues in South Tyneside, is delivering a service to excluded and vulnerable young people who exhibit varying degrees of problematic behaviour, from violence to poor mental health. Often these young people are those that will not or refuse to engage with other services, such as statutory drug and alcohol services. However, when offered an alternative to existing services in the form of mentoring, they engage very well and their behavioural changes are seen to be quite remarkable.

There has been sufficient evidence produced in this evaluation to indicate that NLT's mentoring project has produced impressive results with the young people. Behaviour has been changed from that characterised by violence, offending and problematic alcohol use to behaviour which is more controlled in young people with greater self-confidence and better relationships. There have also been significant improvement in the mental health and well being of the mentees. It would also appear that the mentors themselves receive many benefits from the process of mentoring. It is a 'win-win' situation and indeed an example of '*Big Society*', if ever there was one.

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1.0 Introduction

Northern Learning Trust (NLT) has been providing a mentoring service in South Tyneside since 2006. This current project is aimed at young people who have alcohol use problems. It is a three-year project, starting in April 2011/12 and ending in April 2014, funded by Comic Relief. This is an evaluation of the project.

1.1 Evaluation

This brief evaluation was commissioned by NLT who wanted to better understand the impact of the project. It was carried out by an independent sector specialist¹ over five days between January and March, 2014. The methodology employed by the evaluation consisted of: semi structured interviews with project management and delivery staff; structured interviews with mentors (n=3) and mentees (n=5); analysis of project data; interrogation of case files. All interviews were recorded.

The qualitative data produced by the interviews was formatted into manageable data using framework analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994²) and constant comparative methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967³) were used to analyse the data to clarify meaning and examine, compare and contrast associations. Themes emerged from the different interviews and recurring themes across transcripts were taken to reflect shared understandings of the participants. The report is structured according to those recurring themes.

¹ www.barefootresearch.org.uk

² Ritchie, J. and Spencer, L. 1994. Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R.G (eds) *Analyzing qualitative data*, 1994, pp.173- 194.

³ Glaser, B. G and Strauss, A. L., 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company

2.0 The project

2.1 Background to NLT's involvement in mentoring

NLT has been involved in delivering mentor programmes since 2006. They began by providing a mentoring service for South Tyneside's Youth Offending Service, funded through South Tyneside Council and now they provide mentoring for both adults and young people in different settings within the Criminal Justice System.

The original South Tyneside service (known as the Sandwriter Project) was intended to reduce custodial sentences for young people, ended in 2012 due to funding cuts and a council restructure. Between 2010 and 2012, they also received funding from the Home Office for a mentoring project to tackle gun and knife crime. It was during this busy period that they had a total of four staff working on the mentoring programme: a project manager; a senior project worker; a project worker and a Skills For Life tutor; and 50 mentors. Now they have one project coordinator and a part time manager; and 20 mentors.

In 2011, NLT used the model and the framework that had been delivered since 2006 to develop a mentor programme for young people with alcohol misuse problems in South Tyneside. In 2011, they were successful at gaining funding from Comic Relief for a three-year programme.

NLT has also been working with small numbers of young offenders referred by Newcastle Drug and Alcohol Service since August 2013. This is an expansion of the South Tyneside work, which was permitted by Comic Relief as a means to increase referral numbers.

NLT has two other mentoring projects: a Veterans, Employability and Skills Project (VESP), which started in 2011 and Reaching Out, a prison-based mentoring project beginning in 2012. The latter was a small stand alone

charity which was brought into NLT. It was set up to work with male prisoners on pre-release and then mentoring them in the community, aiding resettlement. VESP works in prisons with veterans who are offenders with custodial sentences. VESP differs to the other projects as the mentors are paid staff.

Connected to NLT's mentoring programme are their literacy, numeracy and employability initiatives delivered for housing agencies, called Learning Hives™. These are learning centres funded by housing agencies, which are often converted houses within social housing estates, staffed by both volunteers and project workers, that aim to help residents back into work through the use of ICT and literacy and numeracy support. The local volunteers also become mentors to other local people, role modelling and developing relationships with service users. NLT says:

“People start as learners, and end up as volunteers and some become mentors”.

This approach provides a locally relevant and cost effective way of providing employability support in the heart of where it is needed.

NLT has developed a comprehensive OCN accredited mentor training package. This consists of 20 hours training, delivered over six weeks, taking one year to gain the qualification (as a means to ensure the commitment from the mentors). NLT has also consistently gained Approved Provider Status (APS), demonstrating their commitment to best practice in mentoring. NLT also act as 'buddies' to other organisations who wish to become approved providers. VESP gained APS in October 2013 and Reaching Out gained APS in February 2014.

2.2 How does the NLT mentoring function?

The NLT mentoring service works by matching an individual with needs with a trained volunteer. The relationship is voluntary and there is no conditional element to the mentoring, i.e. engagement with the volunteer is no a requirement of a court order or other condition.

NLT's mentoring service assists people in a number of key areas including employability, housing and health. The NLT mentors spend time with the mentees; they go and pick them up after school or meet them at weekends. They try to do something different with the young people, something that they would not normally do, such as going for lunch, going to a museum, or a cinema, or a walk on the beach. There is no one place where mentors see mentees, it is not a geographical relationship, like the learning hives. The mentors talk to the mentees, give them something positive in their lives and create a relationship. These three elements or each of them individually can often be absent in the young people's lives.

In the context of this mentoring project, the objective and implication of the service is that it will reduce the young person's alcohol consumption. This is achieved through the relationship and the better decision-making that the support engenders.

2.3 The project approach

The mentoring period is intended to address the behaviour of the young people which is causing them to misuse alcohol. As a project manager stated:

“This can be because of lots of different reasons, such as family or peer pressures, or other difficulties”.

The profile of the individual receiving support tends to be young people who had drinking linked to their offences, for example, a person on a youth

disorder charge, perpetrated whilst drunk. This tends to be binge drinking opposed to chronic alcohol misuse (as alcohol abuse is often exhibited in adults).

Each mentee is entitled to receive up to 30 hours mentoring, which equates to approximately six months (although there is some flexibility with this). Within this period there are definite blocks of time: beginning, middle and end. As an NLT representative says:

“We should be moving young people on ... they shouldn't be dependent”.

The mentors for the project are members of the local community and include students from the local college or university, local professionals, young ex-offenders and retired people. Mentors will either come directly to NLT, referred via the South Tyneside CVS (Council for Voluntary Service), with whom they have a good relationship, or be rooted through an online volunteering portal. The project has never had any problems recruiting volunteer mentors.

The project works closely with Matrix, the local young persons drug and alcohol service. Matrix is a multi agency service funded through the local authority and the health service. Cooperation between these agencies consists of: Matrix training the mentors in drug and alcohol issues relevant to young people and providing the assessment tool (for screening a young persons drug and alcohol use); and NLT accepting their referrals. It was initially planned that Matrix would be the project's main referrer: after young people had been through the Matrix services (which provide the more critical end/Tier 3 drug and alcohol services), they could then receive support from a mentor to help them reintegrate into life in the community.

However, just at the launch of the project in 2011, South Tyneside Council underwent a significant restructure where they lost two thirds of their personnel and there was widespread funding cuts. As a result of this, referrals for all services reduced significantly. Matrix therefore had less clients and as a

consequence smaller numbers to refer on to organisations such as NLT. This changed the way that the project was conceived to function: it was envisioned that the mentor project would operate hand in hand with Matrix, but this did not happen.

In relation to how the project works in practice, the Project Coordinator first visits the prospective mentee at their home. Here, a discussion takes place about needs and issues and the young persons are asked questions such as 'What do you like doing? and What would you like help with?'. This is not an assessment and the emphasis is on establishing a relationship, as the Project Coordinator reported:

"The young people are assessed to death".

The parent/caregiver will be present at this time, where they can ask questions. At no time during the project's history has there ever been a problematic issue between parent/caregiver and the mentor.

The Project Coordinator will match the mentor and mentee and the first meeting will be arranged between the mentee and the mentor. They then meet for between one and two hours a week. They do not generally do more than this, as the project coordinator says:

"The mentors are not support workers, their relationship is different".

After each session, the mentor completes a contact record which they send to the coordinator. Mentors have group supervisions with the NLT Project Coordinator once a month, where cases are discussed in detail.

The mentor period last for approximately six months. The mentor will bring the support period to an end in a planned way, where the mentee will know exactly when the relationship will end. There are instances where, if the mentee requires some additional support, the support period will be extended for a short time. The service has to be mindful about not creating dependency

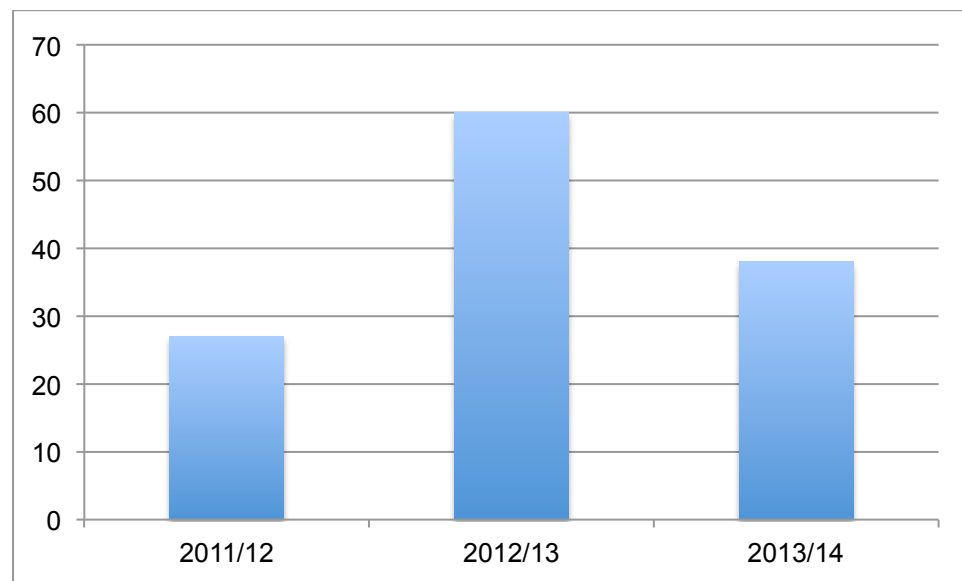
and reliance and if there appears to be a risk of this then expectations are managed very carefully.

3.0 Project outputs

The project has been delivered to a total of 125 young people between 2011/12 and 2012/14 (see figure 3.1). This is slightly higher than the original target of 120 young people over three years.

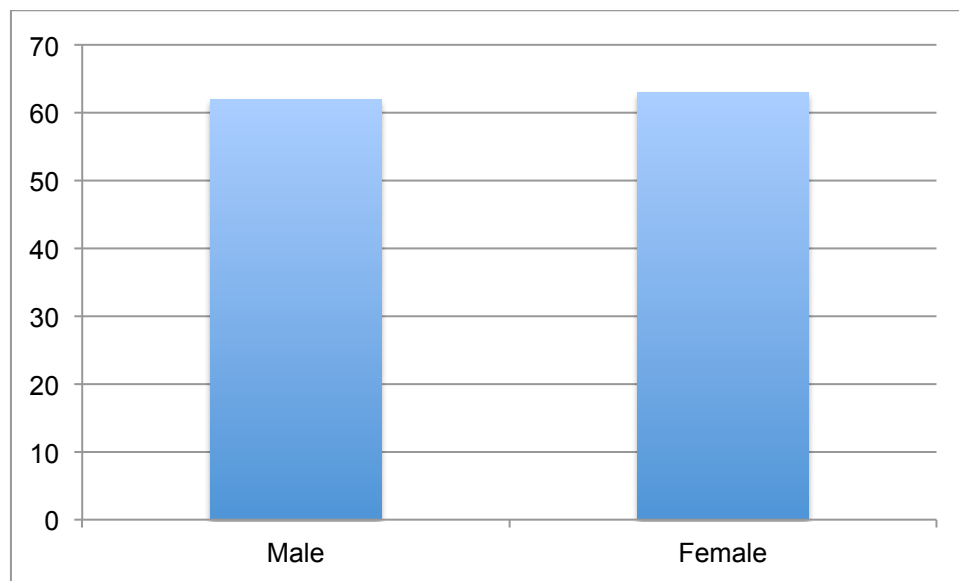
There has been a total of 79 mentors throughout the duration of the project. Currently (March 2014) they have a total of 21 mentors.

Figure 3.1 Annual number of mentees, 2011/12 to 2012/14



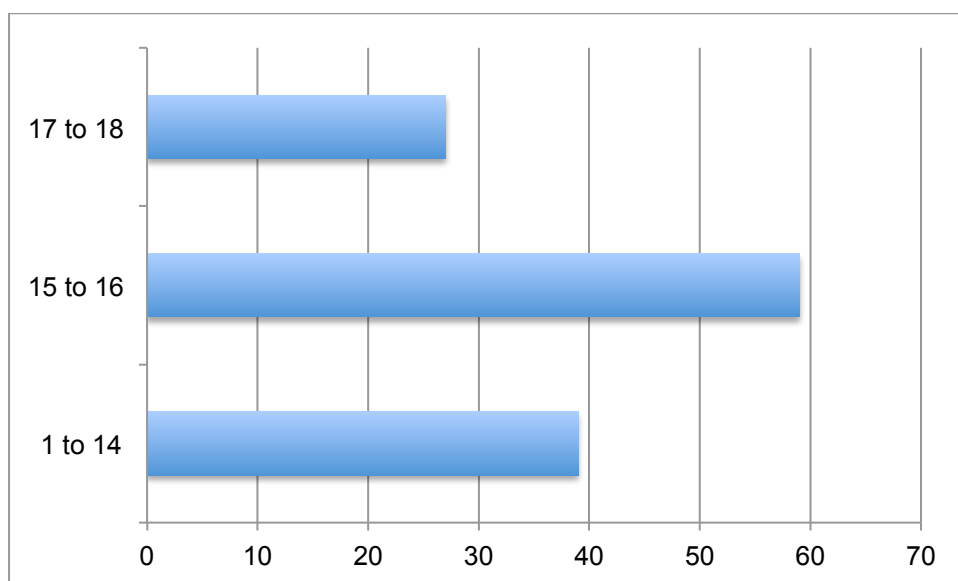
There was an equal number of males and females (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Numbers of male and female beneficiaries



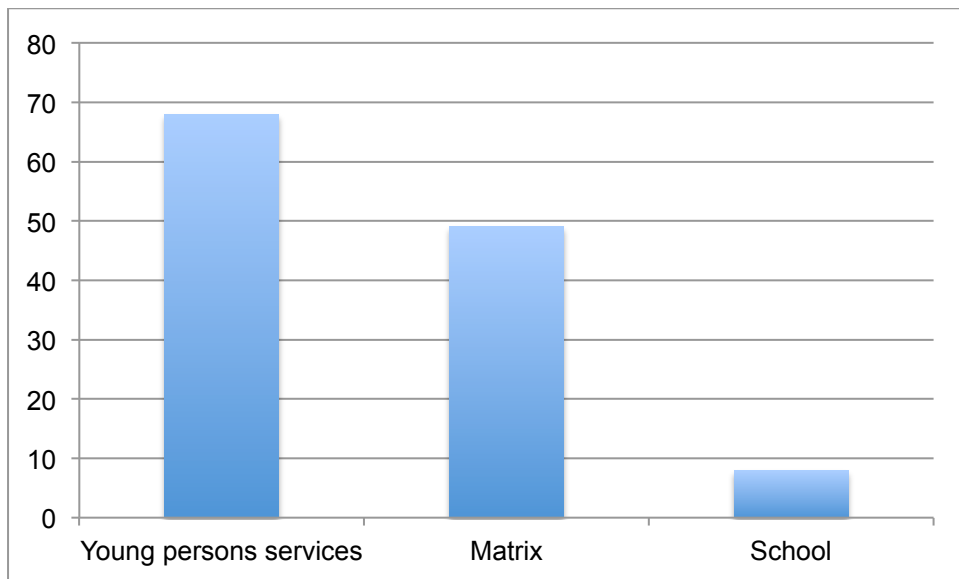
The young people were aged between 14 and 18, with the most numerous being between 15 and 16 years old (see figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Ages of beneficiaries



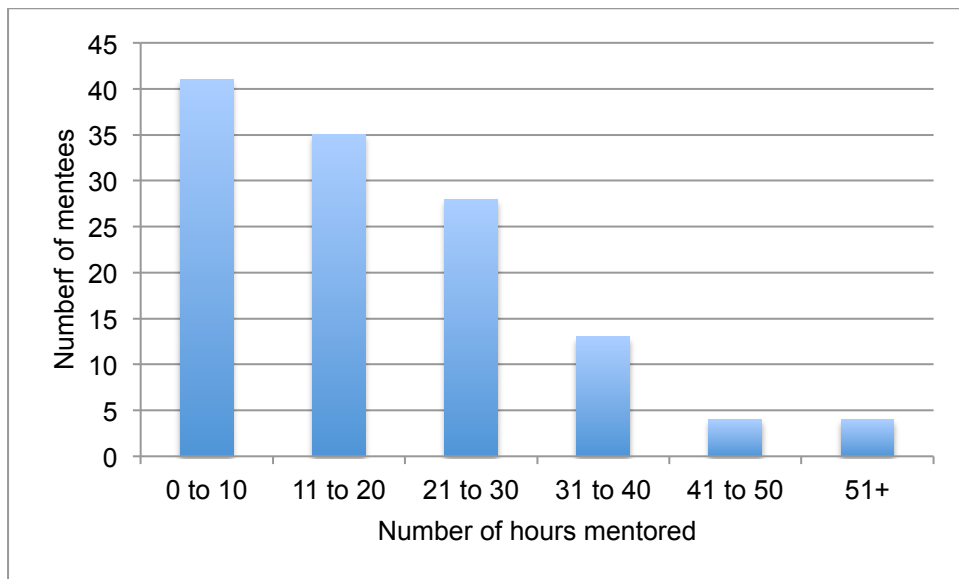
Young people were referred from three main areas: young persons services (mainly the Youth Offending Service); Matrix, South Tyneside's young person's drug and alcohol service; and schools (see figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Referrers into the service, 2011/12 to 2012/14



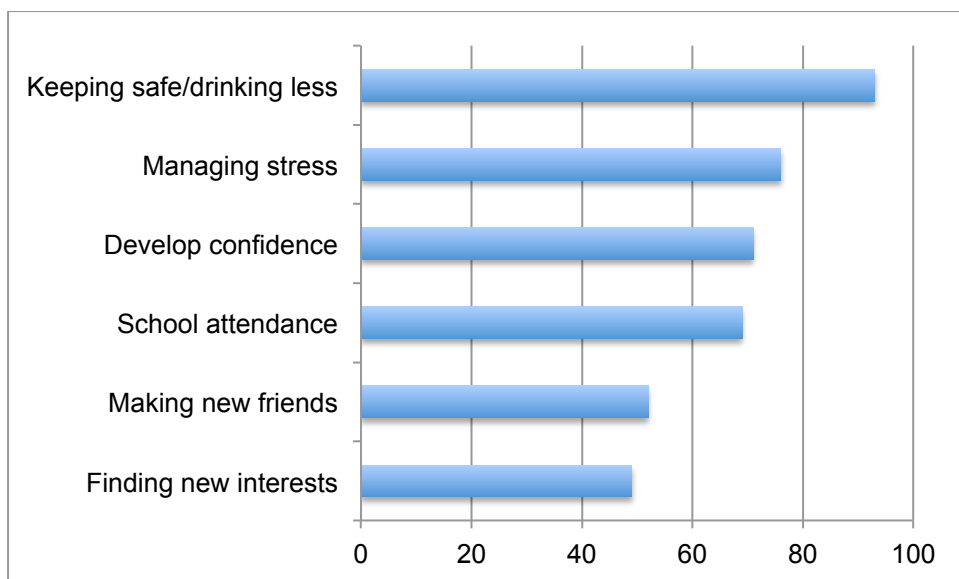
The project provided a total of 1164 mentoring hours between 2011 and 2014. The duration of the mentoring is shown in the following figure. As can be seen, there is a range of durations indicating that some young people need only short support but others require longer and more in-depth support. The project also delivered a total of 444 hours of group work with young people, which covered topics such as trends in alcohol consumption, alcohol and advertising, use of media to research and support critical thinking. Project staff also carried out one-to-one tutoring in specific areas identified by the young person to support school and course work, for example, maths, English, media studies.

Figure 3.5 Duration of sessions



The areas of support provided by the mentors are shown in figure 3.6. As can be seen, the area of support that was most commonly provided was around keeping safe and drinking less, in line with the project objectives. This was followed by the behavioural issues of managing stress, developing confidence and school attendance. And finally the other major areas included the social aspects of making new friends and finding new interests.

Figure 3.6 Areas of support provided to beneficiaries, 2011/12 to 2012/14



4.0 Findings

The evaluation makes the following findings based on the research:

- **The service fulfilled its objectives:** it provided support to 125 young people in the areas of reducing alcohol use, improving behaviour and improving social functioning (see figures 3.1 and 3.6). The project was conceived as an alcohol reduction project for young people and the majority of its referrals came from relevant and appropriate services, such as the Youth Offending Service and the local drug and alcohol service. There was qualitative evidence (see later) to indicate that the project did lead to a reduction in alcohol consumption in the mentees and this was the biggest area of support provided by the mentors. We can therefore make a judgement, with a good degree of confidence, that the project achieved what it set out to achieve.
- **The project was valued by other community-based agencies:** the project became an important referral destination for organisations such as the Youth Offending Service and Matrix. The benefits to these organisations related to the continuing support of their clients and the outcomes achieved with them. For example, the manager of Matrix reported:

‘The mentoring project gave the opportunity to ensure continuity of support as part of our organisation’s exit strategies’.

In relation to the impact that the mentoring project had, the manager continued:

‘[The project] gave an opportunity for young people to have additional support and someone to talk to in sustaining behaviour changes’.

- **The intervention changes behaviour:** this impact is of key importance to the service and is evidenced in the reports of both mentors and mentees. The changes in behaviour amongst mentees ranged from: violent and abusive to more controlled and calmer; depressed and low moods to happier; low self confidence to more secure; and isolated to sociable. For example, a mentee reported:

“There was a big change in me ... if I was a 0 out of 10 before, now I’m a 10 out of 10”.

In other examples of this, a mentor reported one example of a mentee who reached a point of self sufficiency after displaying dependency:

“She had no self confidence at the beginning but by the end, I was just telling her about things and she was going to do them herself ... She went to the Job Centre and she wanted to do training for the mentoring project”.

Another mentor said:

“She had very low self esteem and no confidence, she wouldn’t eat in public, she’d stay in but after she’d got a voluntary job and the change was massive”.

The service was found to change behaviour in number of ways, including through:

- **Building confidence:** this was a key outcome of the support that was reported by all mentees and mentors interviewed. One mentee said:

“I was really low, I had no self confidence but now I’m great, I’ve got loads of friends and I feel good now”.

- **Giving motivation:** it was reported by mentors that the weekly sessions:

“Give mentees something to look forward to, gives them a reason to get out of bed, to feel good about themselves”.

- **Reducing isolation:** there were reports from mentors, mentees and project about mentees being very isolated and often lonely. For example, one mentee said:

“I was in the house by myself, doing nothing all the time, I had low moods, depressed ... I constantly cried”.

The support provided by the mentors addressed this by improving the social skills and social opportunities of the mentees.

- **Valuing the young person:** a key function that the mentor played was valuing the young person and providing a positive influence. One mentor said:

“They often come from a background where they have no positive things, they’re constantly criticised, feel bad all the time ... and we try and give them something to feel good about, to value themselves”.

This plays a key role in increasing and improving the mentees’ confidence, improving their mental health and emotional well being.

- **Providing a trusted and independent individual:** who was not connected to the mentees family or friends. The trusted adult role played by the mentor was valued by mentees, for example, one mentee said about her mentor:

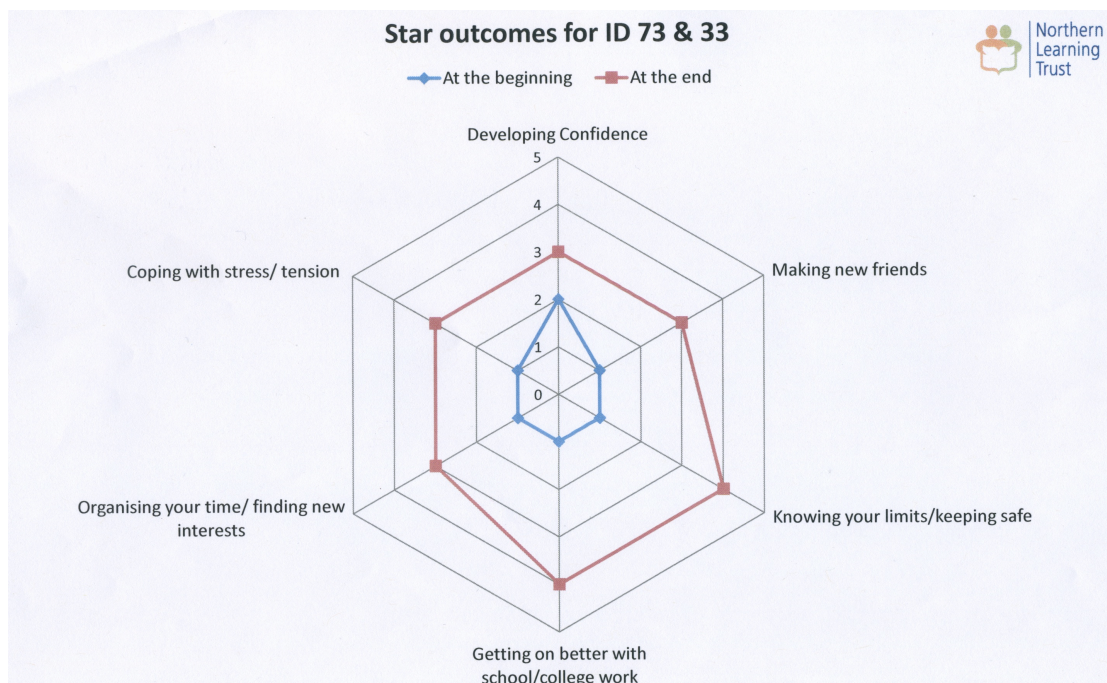
“I could tell her things I couldn’t tell anyone else, it was easier”.

And the trusted relationship was quick to develop, after two or three sessions and became strong. One mentee said about her mentor:

“She was lovely, kind and you could talk to her”.

The behavioural changes amongst the mentees are demonstrated through the Outcome Star monitoring tool used by the project to look at impact. An example is shown below, with the before scores being in blue in the inner circle and the after scores shown in red. As can be seen there has been progress made in five out of the six areas measured.

Figure 3.7 Outcomes Star showing behavioural changes in a mentee, 2014



In a sample of 11 Outcome Stars, progress had been made in an average of 4.5 areas (out of a total of six areas – see above). Upon analysis, the Outcome Stars demonstrated a 62 percent improvement in confidence, 52 percent improvement in knowing their limits (with regards to alcohol) and a 52 percent improvement in coping with stress and tension.

These changes have also been noted by professionals who have been associated with the young people who have been mentees. For example one teacher said of a mentee:

"[name] has made a huge amount of progress with regard to her attitude".

- **There was evidence to indicate that the project impacted on alcohol use:** related to the preceding point about changing behaviour and the fact that the project was conceived as an alcohol reduction project, there was evidence from both mentor and mentee to indicate alcohol reductions. Most of the young people who were mentored had alcohol use that was characterised by binge drinking and this led to problematic behaviours including offending. By addressing issues of confidence and decision making, the project had impacts on clients' alcohol consumption patterns, for example one mentor explained this very well:

"When I first got the young person, she was drinking on the street with her friends and getting into loads of trouble, she used to tell me about how bad her hangovers were. I asked her why she would drink so much to make her feel so ill. Over the weeks we talked about her friendships and about what she wanted and she stopped drinking with her friends, which she thought made her liked and popular. Although she still drinks now, she does it safely in her house and her mam knows where she is and what she's doing, so she stopped binge drinking".

There were other examples about instances of drinking related to poor self esteem and low self confidence and once these were tackled, then alcohol abuse was no longer necessary. Interestingly, the mentors did not directly tackle the alcohol use, but the reasons behind the problematic behavior; a sustainable approach to take.

- **Some young people would engage with mentoring but not engage with other services:** it was reported that young people who have substance misuse issues may not like the stigma associated with organisations such as Matrix. There were certain mentees that only engaged with this service and no others. For example, one mentor said:

“She didn’t want to engage with anyone [of other services, such as Matrix] but was happy to engage with the mentoring [service]”.

- **Mentors are highly skilled at brokering relationships and moving the mentee towards goals:** the mentors employ a necessary informal approach to work with the mentees. First, they must develop a relationship with the young person and gain their trust. Then or during this process, which takes place over the first few sessions, they must determine the issues that the young person requires support with. This is itself a complex task as the mentor is not party to assessments carried out by other agencies, such as Youth Offending Service and so has no background to or knowledge of the young person; the types of issues experienced by the young person are unknown to the mentor. In addition to this, the young person often has low confidence issues and may be not be used to expressing how they feel. The mentor must employ considerable skills to not only gather the information but also to carry out the goal setting/planning; all using an informal and non-directed approach.
- **There is a structure to the intervention:** the work has a beginning, middle and end, which allows the achievements of goal and a throughput of service users. Despite the informal and organic nature of the intervention, the mentee is steered through a specific time period to a maximum of six months. For example, one mentee said:

“There’s a start, where you introduce yourself and then there’s a middle and you set the goals, see how things are and how things are going and

by the end hopefully, which in most cases there are [sic], you've achieved something, they've managed to complete the goal."

- **There are a number of benefits for the mentors:** which include professional and development benefits. Mentors were not all in a similar professional domain, for example, in social or youth work, but did express that the experience contributed to their core professional skills including responsibility, motivation and management skills. A major benefit was expressed as reciprocity and self fulfillment. For example, one mentor said:

"When you see the young person doing well, it makes you feel really good".

- **The peers of mentees were accepting of the mentee/mentor relationship:** during the research, mentees were asked what their friends and families thought about the mentors. Mentees unanimously said that their peers and family were accepting of the relationship. There were occasions when mentees had to explain to their friends about the nature of the relationship. One mentee reported her friends had said:

"It's a great idea".

- **The training prepares and equips the mentors well for their role and responsibilities:** mentors spoke highly of the quality of the training and said it gave them the necessary tools and techniques that they needed for mentoring. Mentors said that further training was available when it was identified during supervision.
- **Mentors felt well supported by NLT:** mentors interviewed reported good training and ongoing professional support from the project coordinator. Support also came in the form of peer support from their fellow mentors at

the group supervision sessions, where advice and support was exchanged. One mentor said:

“They’ve [NLT] been brilliant, I’ve felt safe and well supported”.

- **The relationship between a mentor and a mentee is unique:** there is a mutuality to the mentor/mentee relationship that was expressed in a number of positive ways, many of which included the terms ‘friend’ and ‘friendship’. For example, one mentor said:

“They enjoy the time we are together, it’s not all about their behaviour and talking about that sort of thing ... it’s fun for them”.

However, the relationships, whilst being friendly, were not those of a friend and when questioned, the notion of them being friends was rejected.

Mentors said that there was a strong element of role modeling in the relationship, with one saying:

“... it’s about showing them rounded people and what normal is like”.

Indeed, the function of role modeling was identified by project partners, with one saying:

‘Mentoring is a good form of intervention as it gives opportunity to forge ... relationships and positive role modeling, guiding and helping the mentee to find the right direction⁴’.

Whilst friendship is a strong theme between mentor and mentee, the project was very careful not to develop dependencies (between a mentor and mentee). In practice, this consisted of the period of support being divided into three distinct sections; beginning, middle and end. However,

⁴ Matrix manager, *pers. communication*.

there will still be certain mentees who are more needy than others and the risk of the dependency is greater. For this evaluation, we did interview one mentee who had more complex needs and who reported that it was very difficult to end the relationship. In these cases, it would appear that the project would have to make decisions on a case-by-case basis to decide whether an ongoing relationship between mentor and mentee work was appropriate.

- **Council restructures have affected project performance:** South Tyneside Council underwent significant service cuts in 2011, just when the project was being launched. These cuts included the loss of youth workers, education welfare officers, substance misuse services and other frontline services. There was therefore a lower number of referrals in the first year. The project was designed before the cuts and without a knowledge or expectation of the restructure, it was therefore anticipating a service environment that did not come to fruition. However, despite having lower numbers in the first year, their numbers did recover in years two and three and eventually surpassed total targets.

5.0 Conclusion

The Northern Learning Trust has built up considerable expertise in mentoring since 2006. Starting from a base in South Tyneside it has now expanded into County Durham, Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumberland. The groups that receive the interventions range from people with substance misuse problems (particularly alcohol), prisoners, the unemployed and vulnerable young people (offenders, those at risk of offending and those from disadvantaged and abusive backgrounds). NLT's mentoring and its impacts, particularly those on tackling alcohol use by young people, reducing disorder and improving mental health, have strong links to the strategic objectives of both the Police and Crime Commissioners and the Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The current mentoring project, delivered to young people who have alcohol use issues in South Tyneside, is delivering a service to excluded and vulnerable young people who exhibit varying degrees of problematic behaviour, from violence to poor mental health. Often these young people are those that will not or refuse to engage with other services, such as statutory drug and alcohol services. However, when offered an alternative to existing services in the form of mentoring, they engage very well and their behavioural changes are seen to be quite remarkable.

Mentoring is a very different approach to routine community-based services. It can be described as humanistic, relying upon voluntary contributions of other, often young people, to affect change in people that require support. Although adhering to a broad framework, mentoring is often structure-less and organic, using a non-directed and gentle approach with young people; to which young people are more responsive to.

Although this has been only a very brief evaluation with limited resources, there has been sufficient evidence produced to indicate that NLT's mentoring project has produced impressive results with the young people. Behaviour has been changed from that characterised by violence, offending and problematic

alcohol use to behaviour which is more controlled in young people with greater self-confidence and better relationships. There have also been significant improvement in the mental health and well being of the mentees. It would also appear that the mentors themselves receive many benefits from the process of mentoring. It is a 'win-win' situation and indeed an example of '*Big Society*', if ever there was one.