

A Sense of their Future

**Evaluation of the Hanover Foundations pilot programme,
October 2009-March 2010**

Executive Summary

Level 2 Mentoring Award for Young Learners

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Introduction

- 1.1 In 2008 Hanover Foundations, together with Walking with Leaders, developed an ILM Level 2 Award in Mentoring for Young Learners. The award was designed to foster key advanced speaking, questioning and listening skills and increase employability. The award would also give recognition to the development outcomes achieved and have the potential to become an integral part of education and apprenticeship schemes.
- 1.2 Hanover carried out a pilot programme in Barking College and Uxbridge College in 2009 and 2010 with an initial enrolment of 32 students. The Hanover Foundations designed programme was delivered over 20 weeks, and built a coaching programme around and on top of the award's core learning hours. Twenty-three students received the Level 2 award in May 2010. All the students retained in the programme achieved their qualification.
- 1.3 Charities Evaluation Services (CES) is an independent charity which has provided evaluation support to voluntary and community organisations and their funders for 20 years. CES carried out an evaluation of the pilot programme between February and June 2010, focusing on key learning and development outcomes, but also on the added value of the coaching component of the programme.
- 1.4 Although the sample size was limited by the total number of participants completing the programme, a number of factors give greater weight to the evidence of positive outcomes, and the likelihood of a similar programme with the same quality of delivery achieving similar results. The sample comprised a diverse group, both in profile and competency levels, and there was 100 per cent response rate to the core parts of the evaluation, including the interviews. Evidence gained from a mix of data sources, including knowledge tests, tutor and mentee feedback, coach case studies, mentoring diaries and self-reports all pointed to positive change in key outcome areas in all students participating.

Outcomes for young people

- 2.1 Participants valued the Level 2 mentoring qualification in itself. However, their main attention was on immediate personal challenges, and on managing their home/life balance, becoming more confident, better organised and more effective.
- 2.2 While improved communication (including effective questioning and listening) did not feature in what students wanted to achieve at the start, this contrasted strongly with the value that they placed on achieving these core intended outcomes at the end of the programme. In both self-assessments and interviews, improved communication was reported as the greatest gain from the programme. The evaluation found a new respect for effective listening, using questioning techniques and hearing another perspective without interjecting.
- 2.3 Students tracked their developing skills in mentoring diaries. That evidence, combined with participant and tutor feedback, all pointed to the development of

other interpersonal skills, including time management, self-confidence, self-awareness, self-esteem and self-belief, decision making, problem solving and ability to plan for the future. The data suggested that improved communication skills led to greater self-confidence and there was an evident interaction in the development of different skills areas.

- 2.4 All 23 students said that they had learnt new skills. The quantitative data supplied through participants' self-assessment scores showed positive change in all the outcome areas, although the self-assessment data had limitations in terms of demonstrating the actual level of change. Scoring at the top of the scale initially also prevented a record of any further development. A tendency to rate skills levels at the top end of the scale at the start by some higher achieving students resulted in an adjustment once they had developed an understanding, for example, of the elements of good communication. The highest gains were seen for those who rated themselves lowest at the start of the course. This corresponds to the substantial improvement suggested by the qualitative data for those students who struggled at the beginning.
- 2.5 Twenty mentees provided feedback on the development of their student mentors. They registered improvements in their mentors' ability to listen, ask questions, reflect back and respond positively. Mentees reported being helped to understand themselves and their work better. Seven reported setting goals and targets, planning better and becoming more organised, and they described becoming more serious and more focused on their college work.

Developing professional behaviour

- 3.1 The practical commitment to the course – meeting time schedules, getting agreements and making arrangements with tutors and mentees – in itself contributed to development outcomes; this point was made strongly by one of the college tutors. For example, some had been initially concerned about taking on the programme as an additional commitment, but had found that instead it had helped them to prioritise and structure their activities and give appropriate time to both college and home life.
- 3.2 One-to-one coaching sessions also focused on goal setting, self-organisation and time management. Other personal skills were important; participants noted in their mentoring diaries having more patience and objectivity, being better able to work with, and empower others, better able to get a positive outcome and empower others to succeed.

Applying the new skills

- 4.1 The data showed that new skills were being internalised and brought into day-to-day lives. Participants reported:
- opening up their personal conversations
 - prioritising and structuring their activities
 - contributing more in class and using questioning skills
 - setting targets for course work and getting assignments in on time.

- 4.2 In interviews, several students illustrated how their strengthened confidence was improving their social relations, affecting their personal lives, helping them with university interviews and, more generally, changing their personal perspectives on the future.
- 4.3 Responses to a questionnaire¹ two months after the final Level 2 assessment indicated that students were using and retaining their new skills; participants reported a range of sustained gains and demonstrated how their new skills had affected their college achievements and helped them in their jobs.

The added value of the Hanover Level 2 award programme

- 5.1 The evaluation found good evidence of how the component parts of the programme contributed to the key learning and personal development outcomes. The workshops, the coaching and supervision, the mentoring sessions and reflection on practice through mentoring diaries, all helped to build and reinforce the development of skills.
- 5.2 In interviews, all students were positive about what the course had achieved and found all elements of the programme helpful. The post-course self-assessments and interviews illustrated participants' particular enthusiasm for the coaching and supervision elements.
- 5.3 The coaching element in the programme had a major impact in retaining the students and in skill development:
- The three coaching sessions at the start provided a foundation for the programme, addressing any personal barriers and stretching the students' motivation and aspirations.
 - There was a strong sense of partnership between the coach and student mentor. Twenty-two participants rated the coaching as 'excellent', and one as 'good'.
 - Case histories, mentoring diaries – discussed in coaching sessions – and other data demonstrated how coaching provided a targeted approach to individual participants.
 - Mentoring diaries showed how coaching encouraged the development of self-awareness and skills through reflection back on mentoring practice.
 - Coaches used the performance management element to deal with different skills levels and to minimise difficulties, spending more time with individual mentors as needed.
- 5.4 Nearly all students were enthusiastic about the workshops in delivering and reinforcing the knowledge element of the programme and increasing their understanding of mentoring techniques. A small number found either the first or the second workshop overloaded or overlong.
- 5.5 Mentoring practice sessions were vital for the development of communication skills. Students also built persistence and commitment to their mentees' goals and own solutions. Mentoring held up a mirror to students' own issues, and a

¹ Fourteen of the 23 students responded to this questionnaire.

growing self-awareness and new respect for themselves was reflected in the mentoring diaries.

Project management

- 6.1 Students in both colleges were taken from across curriculum areas, including some from technical and practical disciplines; they had varying competences and differences in starting point. The programme worked at all these levels – from business studies students aiming at university, to those that were already in the workplace, to those who were struggling or who were challenged by written English. Hanover coaches responded flexibly, for example with additional coaching time, to achieve positive outcomes for all the students.
- 6.2 Nine participants dropped out across the two colleges, a result of a timetable clash and pressure of college work rather than student competency or compatibility with the programme. Difficulty in retaining mentees was a greater logistical issue, resulting in multiple mentees in some instances, and some co-mentoring relationships. This issue was more problematic in Uxbridge College which had no previous mentoring programme.
- 6.3 Logistical difficulties during the pilot emphasised the importance of Hanover's project management experience and approach. All students and agency staff in both colleges were high in their praise for the good contact that was maintained by the coaches and their flexibility in rearranging times if necessary and responding to other problems. This flexibility, matched with the calibre of the Hanover coaches and high commitment to outcomes for the students was central to the success of the programme at its different levels.

Conclusion and recommendations

- 7.1 Hanover's pilot programme placed peer mentoring within a college context on a more professional level. More than that, the evidence of short- to medium-term outcomes indicates that the Hanover Level 2 Award in Mentoring programme is well-designed to develop key communication skills and is well aligned to the functional skills agenda. The programme does not focus on communication skills in isolation. Rather, it delivers a mentoring qualification that has its own value and utility, and which at the same time places communication skills at the heart of personal development, allowing those skills to develop the individual more holistically.
- 7.2 The programme could benefit from some minor adjustment in implementation in order to reinforce and maximise benefits. Improved understanding of the programme by college tutors, and shared commitment to it, are key areas to strengthen wherever possible.
- 7.3 Hanover Foundations might also consider:
 - how the drop out rate can be minimised, for example by tightening participant selection processes or criteria

- applying more targeted selection in relation to curriculum area where there is no pre-existing mentoring programme or appropriate support structure within the host agency
- developing mentor/mentee pairings more customised to individual agency circumstances.

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