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New Deal Mentoring Research: Key Lessons Learnt

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Introduction to research

The Mayor's New Deal for Young People was created to ensure that 100,000 disadvantaged young Londoners have access to high quality mentoring opportunities, and that all young Londoners have access to quality local youth activities.

The purpose of this study is to gather evidence and insights into gaps in mentoring, best practices, and challenges in London to help strengthen policy making and the next phase of roll-out of the New Deal for Young People Programme.

This presentation offers an overview of the main findings and insights from the research report about mentoring provision for young people in London.

Who commissioned the study?

The study was commissioned by London Research and Policy Partnership ([LRaPP](#)).

This study was planned to help advance the New Deal for Young People ([NDYP](#)) and provide evidence and intelligence about mentoring provision in London to influence policy and grant making at the GLA.

The study was undertaken by the Institute for Connected Communities ([ICC](#)) based at the University of East London.

Research design

Research questions:

- What existing mentoring is available for young Londoners most in need of support? What are the gaps (target groups, locations, and effective practice)?
- What effective partnerships, collaborations and best practices are currently in place, and what can we learn from them?
- What are the opportunities to expand and improve the quality of mentoring, and support partnerships and collaboration where they are recommended most?
- How might policymakers strengthen mentoring across London?

Timeframe: July 22 to Dec 22

Methods: Telephone interviews, focus group, online surveys and rapid evidence review

Sample population:

Councils in London surveyed ($N=28$), mentor providers surveyed ($N=88$) and funding bodies surveyed ($N=6$), interviews undertaken with mentor providers ($N=17$), focus group meeting with young people ($N=14$ participants).

Analytical framework: thematic and descriptive analysis

Ethics: University of East London Research Ethics Committee (No. ETH2223-0021).



What is mentoring?

- The New Deal defines mentoring as: as a trusting, purposeful and ongoing relationship between a younger person or people, and a person they are unrelated to, which involve the exchange of support, advice, encouragement, and skills development.
- Mentoring can help young people develop the skills they need to succeed in the future, such as communication, problem-solving, and goal-setting. With the guidance of a mentor, young people can learn how to manage their time, develop their career goals, and learn how to form meaningful relationships.
- Mentors have valuable insight and experience that can be used to help young people develop self-confidence and make informed decisions. Through mentoring, young people can learn about different cultures, explore new interests, and gain a better understanding of the world around them.
- Mentoring can also help young people learn how to cope with difficult situations, such as bullying or peer pressure. A mentor can provide a safe space to share feelings and experiences, and help young people develop a positive outlook.
- Overall, mentoring is an invaluable experience that can help young people develop their potential and reach their goals. It can help provide guidance, encouragement, and support, and can be a great way to foster personal growth and confidence.



The principles and characteristics of successful mentoring

- Allow time and resources to set up a programme, to recruit and train mentors, and to match them with mentees.
- Consider using peer-mentors and group mentoring where resources and/or contexts make these options more desirable.
- Focus on the fundamental role that matching plays in successful programmes, considering the experience and interests of the mentor alongside the experience, interests and any presenting problems of the mentee.
- Balance giving agency to mentees in decisions around their mentors with the evidence that shared interests and backgrounds and cultural sensitivity produce better outcomes.
- Support the formation of a strong bond between mentor and mentee, characterized by mutuality, trust and empathy.
- Ensure that mentors and mentees are supported to develop and sustain longer term mentoring relationships, as these lead to better outcomes.
- Support mentors and mentees to have meetings and other communications that achieve a frequency that maintains a quality relationship.
- Have a suitable degree of flexibility in how the mentoring relationship is structured and conducted, so that the personal and contextual circumstances of the mentor and mentee are harmonized as far as possible.
- Focus on how to measure progress and outcomes.



Gaps in mentoring

What has the mapping exercise shown?

- Equity of access to mentoring opportunities forms the most significant barrier to young Londoners accessing the right mentoring provision at the right time.
- More mentoring provisions should be designed to accommodate and target young parents, young carers and young people living with chronic health conditions, who are all currently unserved.
- Young Londoners feel that they have fallen behind in their career planning and find it difficult to move into meaningful employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they need mentoring support to plan their future careers.
- To help widen access to mentoring opportunities, providers should involve young people in co-producing, and utilize multimedia platforms to build awareness and understanding of the purpose of mentoring through the different stages of their life.



Partnerships and collaborations

What has the mapping exercise shown?

- A whole-systems approach is recommended to stimulate the mentoring market to address emerging gaps in provisions.
- A joint commissioning panel for mentoring provision for London is recommended that addresses the requirements of vulnerable young people at a hyperlocal and neighbourhood level to ensure a mentor is available within walking distance.
- A sustainable funding scheme is recommended by mentoring providers in the voluntary sector to help recession-proof themselves to sufficiently sustain mentoring opportunities during the economic downturn.
- A joint approach is recommended to better recruit and train mentors who reflect the diverse identities and backgrounds of young Londoners.



Quality of provisions

What has the mapping exercise shown?

- The cost of travel to attend in-person mentoring opportunities for young Londoners adds a further physical barrier to full participation, which should be addressed by hybrid models of delivery.
- Improved efficacy in the delivery of mentoring opportunities is recommended for young Londoners traumatised and/or at risk of re-traumatisation, supported by agile commissioning models.
- Good mentoring opportunities require a high degree of cultural competencies – Which should be at the heart of the provision – to ensure that services are culturally responsive to the lived experience of young Londoners.
- A common framework is recommended to better understand the outcomes/impact of mentoring opportunities commissioned for young Londoners.



Youth Voice

What have young participants from the focus group expressed?

- Build a trusting mentor–mentee relationship
- Create an atmosphere and relationship so that young people can freely air their concerns and issues and be provided with tailored advice and guidance.
- Visit and talk to young people
- Invest in youth and community spaces
- There should be more visibility for opportunities that are accessible and can ‘fast track’ people into certain job roles
- Active listening to young people.
- Widen access and reach towards young people.
- Improve access to mental health support
- Increase youth clubs funding and actively prevent closure of youth organisations
- Improve allowances for young people’s needs, especially though mental health support services/engagement services for young people

Key lessons learnt

What mentoring opportunities are available?

- A wide range of mentoring opportunities are available for vulnerable young people living in London.
- Mentoring opportunities are **evenly spread** across 28 London boroughs
- Many of the mentoring opportunities have been delivered **in-house** by Councils or commissioned out to the voluntary sector.
- Mentoring provision delivered in-house tend to be **targeted at high-risk groups** (e.g., care experienced and looked after children) to ensure that all young people up to 18 years of age (25 for young adults with learning difficulties) participate in education or training.
- Councils have commitment to continue the **same level of funding** in spite of having to make tough public spending decision in the economic downturn

Opportunities to expand and improve

- Young research participants appreciated a **hybrid delivery model** as it is an opportunity to **share best practice and strengthen mentoring** provision.
- Young research participants wanted to increase their **understanding** of the **purpose and benefits** of mentoring, and better promotion of mentoring opportunities.
- **Mentoring** can be an **early intervention** rather than accessed at an acutely critical moment in a young person's life.
- Improving the quality of mentoring includes **coordinated recruitment** of highly skilled mentors with a range of skills, knowledge, and experience.

For more information go to the full research report

Key lessons learnt

Policymaker roles

- Policymakers should consider that **funding linked with the cost-of-living-crisis** is a major challenge to mentoring provisions, especially at a time when vulnerable young people's problems are compounded by living in poverty.
- To help **widen access** to mentoring opportunities, commissioners should involve young people in the **commissioning process**, and also **utilise multimedia platforms** to build awareness and understanding of the purpose of mentoring along the life course.
- A **common framework** is recommended to better understand the outcomes/impact of mentoring opportunities commissioned for young Londoners.
- A **joint commissioning panel** for mentoring provision for London is recommended that addresses the requirements of vulnerable young people at a hyperlocal and neighbourhood level to ensure an appropriately **matched-mentor** is available within walking distance or one click away.

Practitioners

- The **cost of travel** to attend in-person mentoring opportunities for young Londoners adds a further physical barrier to full participation, which should be addressed by hybrid models of delivery.
- Good mentoring opportunities require a **high degree of cultural competencies** – which should be at the heart of the provision – to ensure that support is culturally responsive to the lived experience of young Londoners.

How can we expand our knowledge about young people's needs?

- Mapping the pathways to access mentoring opportunities to help to better understand when, how and why young people access mentoring programmes.
- Interdisciplinary research into the experiences of young people exposed to mentoring opportunities, with an emphasis on the impact/outcome on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of young Londoners.
- Co-design and test with young people and mentors novel and innovative approaches, techniques and models of delivering mentoring opportunities.
- Evaluation of mentoring effectiveness and how successful demonstrator approaches can be integrated and sustained through existing or emerging mentoring provisions.
- All the above supported through a dynamic data observatory

[For more information go to the full research report](#)