



MCR Pathways

COVID Impact Report 2021



Increasing numbers of young people engaged

The past 18 months has provided an unrelenting number of challenges for all involved with MCR Pathways. The MCR team took on every challenge head on, creating new processes and creative ways to maintain contact and **support of 3,403 young people during multiple lockdowns.**



3,403
Young People Supported

20,636

Lockdown
Mentoring Sessions



The transformation of in person mentoring into a suite of virtual options chosen by the young people **allowed for 20,636 sessions during the 18 weeks of school closures** in the lockdowns in March and following Christmas. This provided critical contact and support for our most vulnerable young people at a time when they needed it the most.

During the **periods schools were open but operating under COVID restrictions, there were 13,022 1:1 mentoring sessions**, with 6,589 held in person and 6,433 held virtually. For the younger cohorts, group work session attendances were 6,428 giving a total of **19,450 sessions whilst schools remained open.**

When schools were open under COVID restrictions we supported:

6,428
group work sessions

13,022
1:1 mentoring sessions

Over the pandemic, in partnership with each school, the dedicated MCR team has been **able to deliver 40,086 sessions in mentoring, 1:1 support and group work.** Critically this provided a continuity of care and essential relationships links, whilst keeping school and education engagement.

Throughout the pandemic we supported a grand total of:

40,086

sessions in mentoring,
1:1 support, and group work

1,557
new mentor registrations

769
new mentor matches

In addition there was a considerable number of other informal and relationship based supports between the young people and the MCR Pathways Coordinator throughout. It is hugely to the credit of our mentors, school staff and MCR team for going above and beyond to support the young people.

The impact and success of this has meant MCR has continued to grow both in terms of numbers of new schools and local authorities and also increased the number of young people supported within existing. We have continued to recruit, train and support more mentors for our young people with 1,557 new mentors registrations and 769 mentor matches made.

£19.4 million

funding to support more young people across the country



The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges for our young people and their families, mentors, schools, our partners and funders. The issues affecting our young people, families and communities will be felt for many years. The need for 'one good adult' support in the form of MCR mentors integrated within the education system has never been greater. Given the recognition and **£19.4m financial support through Scottish Government, matched by councils and schools into an overall £50m package**, the team will expand its capacity and capabilities much further to ultimately reach the 15,000 young people target we have set for Scotland. We anticipate a significant multiple of this number of young people will be in scope for MCR England.

Rapid virtual mentoring development now blended with in person mentoring

To provide a continuity of vital support, we designed and developed a virtual mentoring platform which both met the schools' and local authorities' requirements and was safe and sustainable for both mentee and mentors. This allowed us to maintain contact, deliver group sessions and mentoring during periods where young people and/or mentors have been unable to be present in school.



“ It has especially helped me as I've had a lot of struggles getting to uni. My mentor has been a huge help to my confidence, my social skills, she's helped me get really far. I wouldn't be able to get to where I was today without her support. Meeting virtually has been really helpful, especially in lockdown when I feel so isolated from the rest of the world.

Aileen*, St Machar Academy, Aberdeen

*Name has been changed as young person preferred to remain anonymous.

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“ My mentee is like a ray of sunshine, with the biggest of smiles, which is contagious. I always feel good after our meetings and meeting up virtually helped me no end during lockdown when I couldn't meet up with friends and family. We recently had our first face-to-face meeting since lockdown which was wonderful. It was like meeting up with an old friend after a long period apart. Just exactly what we both needed after.

Linda, Mentor at Springburn Academy, Glasgow

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We continue to hear many fantastic stories across the country of how young people and mentors have connected virtually and kept the critical relationships alive.

Continued mentor recruitment despite lockdowns

Throughout the pandemic, the team has continued to actively promote and progress recruiting mentors and effectively managing them through the recruitment pipeline despite the constraints. All content and processes were rapidly adjusted to be delivered virtually whilst ensuring compliance with key quality and practice standards. The mentoring services team adjusted to working from home and continued to target and actively campaign. The number of individuals they were able to engage and process through the pipeline was exceptional in the circumstances with **1,557 new mentor registrations, over 1,000 interviews and 769 mentors who completed the process** through to being matched with a young person.

1,557

New mentor registrations

1,247

Information sessions completed

1,054

1-1 interviews completed

889

Mentor Training attended

769

Mentors matched

Continuing the education impact

80.7%

of MCR mentored young people progressing to college, university or employment

VS

65.9% national figure

In terms of impact of the young people, MCR **continues to focus on the 3 Key performance indicators being Staying on, Attainment and post school Destinations**. Despite the multiple disruptions, the results for the year remain extremely positive with our **Care Experienced mentored young people out-performing their non-mentored counterparts in every key area recorded**.

Of particular note was MCR mentored young people in the care system in Glasgow, the most mature area achieving I+ qualification at Level 5 or above at 83.2% compared to the national number of 57.2%; 80.7% progress to college, university or employment compared to 65.9% nationally progressing.

In one of the newer areas in Aberdeenshire 100% of the mentored care experienced young people achieved I+ qualification at Level 5 or above compared to the national number of 57.2%; with 87.5% progressing to college, university or employment compared to 65.9% nationally.

“ Since meeting my mentor I’ve had such a better mindset than ever before. I used to be stressed about exams all the time and I had no confidence in myself at all but my mentor has helped me realise that I need to start believing in myself and do what’s best for me instead of putting other people first. If it wasn’t for my mentor I think this year at school would have been a lot more difficult for me.

Victoria, Auchendarvie Academy, Ayrshire

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Providing an equality of internet access for those that need it the most

We provided our young people and their families 330 laptops and internet-ready wireless dongles together with unlimited data plans to ensure they have equitable access to school systems and learning resources. These are used to maintain their contact with their mentors and coordinators and also shared with other family members using online services including utility and finance management and online shopping. We continue this support to those that have left school during the period and a number of young people who have been completely disengaged from education. The strength of relationships between the young people and their school coordinators has again been recognised as a critical component and link.

See **BBC’s Reporting Scotland** interview with young people, mentors and Iain MacRitchie.



330

laptops with unlimited data provided to our young people



“ That laptop helped me a lot during lockdown because I was able to get in contact with my mentor more often and was able to speak to her as well. The last year was difficult, but speaking to my mentor helped a lot because I was able to get help on how to deal with situations that I was struggling with.

Rachel Haggerty, St Roch’s Secondary, Glasgow

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Ensuring the voices of the most disadvantaged young people were heard



During lockdown, we were deeply concerned about the feedback on how the young people were coping and the need to have their views heard and included in all recovery plans. We consulted with them and undertook a detailed survey of both the young people and mentors. This has given us detailed insight into their experiences and how we, other partners and local and national government can best support them as we emerge from the pandemic.

We received **1,025 detailed responses from our group of young people in city, town and rural settings**, representing what we believe was the most comprehensive analysis in the UK for those in or on the edges of the care system. The results confirmed what was expected for our most disadvantaged young people with **66.8% feeling low, anxious and stressed and critically 68.2% being unable to do any schoolwork**.

Through further analysis we were able to identify and recommend immediate improvements with **49.1% feeding back education materials issued were too hard to understand, 26.7% having additional caring duties which had to be factored in and 42.1% requesting printed copies given their online experiences**. It also identified despite provision of additional equipment that **there remained 14.5% who did not have IT or internet access and 19.5% who did not have suitable space at home**.

Our analysis and subsequent 10 key recommendations were widely published and formed part of school, authority and other agency recovery plans. Critically this included the need to recognise schools needed to be open fulltime and were much more than just places of education. For the young people and communities, it is important to **reframe schools as safe havens, community hubs and critical learning spaces where essential trusted relationships, opportunity and aspirations are formed**.

Impact on Mental Wellbeing

66.8%
feeling low, anxious
and stressed

88.8 %
sleeping patterns
impacted

“It’s hard to sleep when you have a lot on your mind, especially worrying about school and your next steps since everything has been a big change and it’s not as if it’s a change that we had control over.”

Impact on Education & Return to School

68.2%
did no
school work

80.5 %
hard to get back
school routine

“Since I’m used to having people around to explain it face-to-face, it’s been a bit harder getting help with schoolwork, especially since it’s quite often that I struggle putting what I need help with into words and I struggle learning from words alone if I don’t understand the text.”

Impact on the Future

79.6%
worried about grades

61.5%
leavers worried about
next step

“It will affect the job industry and work experience part because for what I want to do when I leave school, I need a lot of work experience. I’m also concerned about how it will affect my family.”

Thinking nationally but implementing and developing locally



MCR Pathways provides the content standards, programme quality and operational integrity nationally, whilst the programme is delivered and further developed locally through a regional approach. Each region is given its own programme branding focused on the young people and building their aspirations. This is aligned to key geographic regions in for example Young Glasgow Talent, Young Shetland Talent to Young Hertfordshire Talent. However there are limitless options within the trademarked structure to ensure a local approach that meets the needs of each community.



During lockdowns the regional approach facilitated an array of local community based support to be organised, often at a school level. We have many examples of this across the country, where schools were used as a Hub for MCR young people to drop in and work, socially distanced, as they couldn't study at home. Over the summer, MCR Pathways Coordinators across the country ran online digital social clubs for young people, where they had the chance to develop creative skills, fitness knowledge and take part in voluntary activities to help the community. Many Coordinators and young people took part in food drives during lockdown, delivering parcels and Christmas parcels to those in the greatest need.

Education recovery, youth employment and return on investment



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Ready to support to
15,000
young people in
300
schools

The Scottish Government announced in March 2021 that they will invest up to £19.4m to support the expansion of the MCR Programme across Scotland. In addition the Hunter Foundation has donated £7.5m to MCR mentoring and a leadership development initiative. The MCR element will be match funded by local authorities in particular in recruiting the MCR Pathways Coordinators in each school. This takes the full financial commitment to MCR to £50m overall.

MCR will now grow to 300 schools and 15,000 young people supported each week. This marks a major strategic milestone in MCR's objective of reaching every young person who is experiencing disadvantage nationally whilst being made a permanent part of the education system.

“ I'm delighted to announce £19.4 million of Scottish Government funding to support a 6 year mentoring programme by MCR Pathways to help young people reach their full potential. This programme will be delivered in partnership with local authorities that wish to participate, and will be part of the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee to provide long-term support where it is needed most.

John Swinney, Deputy First Minister

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UK national footprint

The opportunity to grow the programme into England has been progressed over the last year and Hertfordshire will be the first area to adopt the programme. Whilst the county has areas of affluence the schools expressing interest are located in high areas of deprivation and those experiencing county line's drug related issues. These will include **Stevenage and Waltham Cross** in a first cohort of up to 10 schools. In parallel with the launch in Hertfordshire, a selection of London Boroughs and Northern towns in or around the Greater Manchester areas are also being targeted.

To support the funding required, some key partners have been targeted. In addition, the MCR Foundation has provided seed funding. Impetus partners with The Henry Smith Charity announced in May that they will launch an 'Engage Fund' backing charities tackling school exclusions and MCR have been announced as one of the recipients.



UK national award, recognition and engagement with Westminster Government



We have also been recently awarded with a Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) Award for 2021, selected from a field of 127 applicants. The CSJ was founded by Iain Duncan Smith with a mission of putting social justice at the heart of British politics. CSJ Awards are an annual, high profile award that honours the best grassroots, poverty-fighting charities and social enterprises from across Britain.



CSJ produced a film specifically with one of our lower key young people and their mentor. A simple but powerful example of how relationships sit at the heart of everything we do and how transformational they can be.



Click [here](#) to learn more about **The CSJ Awards 2021**.

The CSJ Awards are a highlight of our year, as we can advance the cause of Britain's best charities, who are doing so much for this country.

MCR Pathways supports thousands of vulnerable children across Scotland, and by helping them to excel in their education, forms the foundation for a healthy and stable future. They show that even children who have had a very difficult start to life can reach their full potential.

Andy Cook, Chief Executive of the Centre for Social Justice

MCR Pathways are an amazing charity. They provide mentors to children who are in or on the edges of the care system, in their final years of school. They help them to achieve their potential and overcome their difficulties.

So I must congratulate MCR Pathways for winning the CSJ Award. Emily is one of the young women who have been helped by having a mentor. She wants to be a chef and baker and she has plans to open her own restaurant one fine day. So, Emily... It is not an impossible dream to one day open a restaurant and I hope one day I will get to come to yours.

Dame Prue Leith CBE

The CSJ recognition will help propel us from the 3,000 young people supported each week to reach our ambition of 10 times that number. The transformational MCR model helps reduce exclusions and the subsequent devastation in education outcomes, employment opportunities and life chances.

By giving our most disadvantaged young people 1:1 relationship support, as part of the education system, we ensure they are determined by their talent and potential, never their circumstances. We hope MCR mentoring will be established across every secondary school in England, as it is being in Scotland, reducing inequality and inspiring far greater levels of social mobility.

Iain MacRitchie MCR founder & Chair