

Falmouth University

World of Work Quest, May - July 2024

Evaluation report

Brightside and Falmouth University delivered World of Work Quest mentoring, which ran between May and July with the aim of building students' knowledge and understanding of post-16 and post-18 pathways and feel confident to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Project overview

Bodmin: World of Work Quest project aims to support mentees from Bodmin College to make more confident and informed decisions about their next steps, in particular when thinking about post-16 and post-18 pathways, and vocational routes. The project aimed to reach 200 mentees in Year 10. Falmouth recruited one school with 175 pupils. The weekly topics covered goal setting, career research, CVs and interviews and understanding the world of work.

Mentee outcomes

This project focused on evaluating key outcomes that influence a student's trajectory towards higher education, such as aspirations, understanding of higher education, and confidence in securing a place. We aligned these outcomes with TASO's validated Access and Success scales, which have been developed to assess factors that are strongly associated with educational attainment. By employing these rigorously tested scales, we can confidently evaluate how well the project supports the students' progress toward higher education, a critical indicator of their future academic success.

- Mentees have improved study skills
- Mentees are able to clearly explain their ideas
- Mentees are better able to distinguish how reliable information is

Methodology

- We measure engagement through quantitative data pulled from our online platform
- We measure the impact of the project through baseline and exit surveys, completed by mentees, that address mentee outcomes
- We monitor and measure feedback about the mentoring experience for mentors and mentees through questions on the exit surveys

Participation and engagement

175 students invited

139 chose a mentor



79% conversion rate

The table below shows the number of mentees by messages sent:

# messages	1+	2+	3+	5+	10+
# mentees	133 (92%)	103 (71%)	87 (60%)	46 (31%)	8 (5%)



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175 mentees were invited to join the platform from Year 10. 139 mentees created their accounts and found a mentor, taking conversion to 79%. Of those matched, 133 mentees went onto sending 1+ message (92%) and 87 send three or more messages (60%).

Impact*

50 mentees completed the baseline and exit survey (a response rate of 29%). Brightside also added some additional attainment-raising questions into the exit survey which were not included in the baseline survey. Even though this does not allow us to capture robust distance travelled information, they do provide an indication of the extent to which these skills were impacted by mentoring.

One of the key aims of the project was for mentees to understand possible next steps and careers. Over 70% of mentees identified this in the baseline survey as their reason for taking part in mentoring:

- "...gain some extra knowledge and receive advice from someone who was in my shoes to help me with my career choice for the future and best next steps..."
- "...discover what options would be best for me and to have more general knowledge on the possible steps I could take after school..."
- "...to see what uni is like..."

We used responses to the mentee exit surveys, as well as conversation analysis, to reflect on the impact of the project. One key theme that emerged was mentees' understanding of study skills and ways to pick key information that is most important when they study. One mentee said their reason for taking part in mentoring was: "...to help find what steps might be right for me given my skill set to do well in my exams and future..." 68% of mentees who completed the exit survey agreed or strongly agreed they can tell what information is most important when they study. One mentee said in the exit survey that their favourite part of mentoring was: "Definitely the information I got about next steps and how to prepare for my exams...it allowed me to see everything and plan my future..."

36/50 mentees also stated that they can continue working at their studies even when they find it difficult. During a key word search of mentee conversations, 'study skills' was 48 times by mentees and the word 'revision' came up 16 times. One mentee said: "...she gave great detail of managing my subjects and how to prepare for exams...and it really helped me." 84% of mentees who completed exit survey attributed at least some the skills they learnt is being supported by mentoring.

Furthermore, exit survey results showed how mentees developed their academic skills on the project. 74% of mentees said they were able to tell how reliable information is when they read something, and 72% agreed they can express themselves in writing even when concepts are complicated. This could be a result of mentors sharing useful websites and reliable sources with mentees. The conversation extract below shows this:

Mentee: "I'm not sure yet...something to do with sports...I've heard of sports science but unsure of what it is..."

Mentor: "...I studied a Sport Studies A level and found it really interesting, you learn about sports psychology and history. Yes, worth considering a sport studies qualification with your interests. This website gives some further information: <https://www.brightknowledge.org/sport-leisure/sports-science>"

Mentee: "Thankyou, I had a look through...looks interesting and fun and easy for me to see what I need to get in my GCSEs now..."



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Feedback

Mentees were asked to give feedback on their experience of the project. 25 mentees rated their overall experience a 7 or above. In addition:

- 31/50 said their mentors shared useful information
- 10/50 said their mentors helped them set goals
- 26/50 said their mentors gave helpful feedback
- 20/50 said their mentors were positive and encouraging

Mentees also shared ideas to improve their mentoring experience:

- "...adding a variety of mentors to the programme to talk to..."
- "...wider range of mentors so more sectors and subjects are available and I can learn about"
- "...by giving us more time to talk to them"
- "more activities and support with what I could talk to the mentors about..."

Six mentors completed the exit surveys. Mentors felt:

- They were able to tailor their communication to young people by 'some' or 'a great extent'
- They felt mentoring experience shared their own personal and professional development by 'a great extent'

One mentor said they supported their mentee with: "skill development, confidence building, perspective, accountability, career options, learning opportunities, and role modelling."

Another mentor said: "Not sure if I was setting enough concrete goals or if sometimes the mentoring was more of a chat (which might be okay if what the mentee needs)." This is interesting as mentees felt their mentors could do goal setting more explicitly. This could be embedded into mentor training sessions in future projects.

Recommendations

- Mentees needed more support to sustain engagement until the end of the project - linked teachers are advised to reach out to pupils following the engagement reports sent by Brightside, as well as embedding time for mentees to message their mentor once a week into the school timetable
- Brightside and Falmouth University could consider extending the project length
- Brightside will explore ways to develop the weekly communications to support mentees' and mentors' conversations, i.e. through setting tasks and activities to complete
- Falmouth University should consider embedding Ask the Expert so mentees have more exposure to other mentors with variety of career/subject choices
- Goal setting is something mentors need to do more explicitly with mentees in future projects – we should focus on how to do this well during mentor training
- Brightside encourages Bodmin College to identify some sectors mentees are interested in and group chats to be created as an additional way to find out more career related information with another mentor
- Falmouth University could explore the possibility of a school visit or talk once the project finishes, where mentees can meet their mentors (virtually or on campus) - this could create a more tangible outcomes and excite mentees who may be disengaged
- Falmouth University is encouraged to incentivise the to exit surveys so more responses can be captured in future projects

