plusone mentoring

evaluation

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May 2011

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

The Scottish Institute for **Policing Research**

May 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary

plusone mentoring is an early intervention programme that uses a voluntary mentoring approach to engage with young people aged mainly 8 to 14 years who are deemed at high risk of future offending. It combines the *School, Social Work, Police and Community* model with a youth work model which emphasises community involvement and responsive practice in work with young people. *plusone mentoring* operates with a theory of change that draws on evidence that there are key risk factors for future offending that can be tackled at a young age (such as aggression and violent behaviour, disruptive family and personal relationships, perception of self and others, poor self-esteem, or challenging behaviour in home, school or community). The nature of such risks means that long-term and client-centred approaches to mentoring are required. Multi-agency referral groups in three locations in Scotland (Bellshill, Perth and Kirkaldy/Levenmouth), which comprise Police, Social Work, NHS, Education, Community Wardens and other agencies refer young people who are assessed as having high or very high risk of future offending to the *plusone mentoring* programme, which is based at local YMCA centres. Programme managers for *plusone mentoring*, based at the YMCA, recruit and trains volunteer mentors, match them to work with young people and supervise the mentoring process.

Over the first full year of *plusone mentoring*:

- 47 young people had been involved in mentoring;

- Young people gave the experience of mentoring a high value and identified mentors as having important roles in providing support, undertaking activities which provided alternatives to boredom and anti-social behaviour, providing advice, and acting as mediators to other institutions;

- Among young people who had been involved in *plusone mentoring* for at least six months, there was evidence of considerable improvement across the range of risk factors, with improvement particularly marked in relation to young people's behaviour, their attitudes to offending, the risk for the young people associated with their neighbourhood, and the young people's skills and positive relationships;

- 80 adults had been recruited and trained as volunteer mentors;

- Volunteer mentors have been drawn from a range of social and geographical backgrounds to work with the young people;

- Mentors valued opportunities to develop their skills in working with young people, to deepen their understanding of the complex situations in which many young people find themselves, and to develop their attitudes in a non-judgemental way. Undertaking volunteer mentoring was also a means by which many volunteers developed skills which they saw as being of positive use in a variety of social and caring professions;

- Established networks and local reputation of the YMCA were central in recruiting volunteers and in encouraging families to let the young person participate in *plusone mentoring*.

Our evaluation of *plusone mentoring* is that it has had a positive impact on the lives of young people at a high level of risk of offending. It has effectively adopted a youth work approach using volunteer mentors, and demonstrates a range of best practice in mentoring, including:

- Long-term, frequent and regular engagement

- Careful attention to how mentors and mentees are matched

- Young people understand the voluntary nature of their participation and the focus on their needs

- Detailed monitoring and supervision of mentors

- Successful targeting of young people fitting the scope of the programme so mentoring does not aim to replace other specialised services where these are more appropriate.

plusone mentoring has strengths in the professional qualities of its staff, the commitment of its volunteer mentors, and its theoretical and practical integrity which is a key to successful mentoring interventions.

plusone mentoring is significant in its focus on work with a younger cohort than the majority of other community-based mentoring projects in the UK and in its prevention scope. Furthermore, it specifically aims to work with 'high tariff' cases of young people. In contrast to many other mentoring programmes, *plusone mentoring*, by focusing on this younger age group, shows a high level of impact in both improvements in behaviour and in developing young people's emotional and social resilience.

The programme works in multi-agency partnerships with a range of child protection, health, education and criminal justice agencies through local referral groups, where links with the Police and Education services have been particularly effective. For partner organisations *plusone mentoring* is a valued and distinctive approach in the child protection/youth justice field which provides a service which is complementary to those of existing agencies. It is also understood as a 'process' not an 'event' with the long-term nature of the intervention being highly valued.

There are some limits in the impact that *plusone mentoring* can provide for the young people, particularly in their wider social and neighbourhood settings, which mentoring cannot be expected to affect directly. However, we find strong potential for *plusone mentoring* to draw on the experience of working with a key group of vulnerable young people, and understanding their needs and potential

and to be a key stakeholder in informing wider policies on children, youth, public services and local development.

plusone mentoring offers a successful model for delivery of elements of key national policies such as the child-centred approach of *Getting It Right for Every Child*, the multi-agency approach to prevention in *Early and Effective Intervention*, and the building of community capacities in service delivery (*Changing Lives*), and as an example of 'justice reinvestment' it represents a high return to stakeholders in reducing risks of future offending.

Key recommendations are:

- Plusone mentoring should be continued and long-term financial security provided to maximise the impact of the approach.

- We recommend mapping of demand and provisions for young people at risk of future offending to identify locations which would benefit most from an extension of this model and where the institutional circumstances can accommodate the project most effectively in future.

- We recommend that future evaluations are commissioned as the programme moves forward. This would provide a strengthened evidence base for the sustainability and long-term impacts of the programme in young people's lives.

- We recommend that *plusone mentoring* continues to target young people at high risk of future offending. The model adopted has considerable potential to be used in other areas of Scotland and beyond, and should be regarded as an example of best practice.

- We recommend that *plusone mentoring* continues to facilitate and mediate young people's involvement in a range of activities both within and beyond the project as they have a significant diversionary role.

- Local and national authorities should understand the increase in risk levels for young people associated with reductions in service provision for them and should mitigate against these.

- We recommend that *plusone mentoring* continues the good practice of recruiting and training volunteer mentors from local communities and building increased community capacity in working with vulnerable young people.

- We recommend that YMCA remains the key provider of *plusone mentoring* because of its established relationships in local communities, its ability to attract a diverse range of volunteers and its effective liaison with young people's families.

- We recommend a clearer strategy of communicating the achievements of *plusone mentoring* in working with young people regularly and systematically to the stakeholders involved in the multi-agency partnerships. This would encourage greater buy-in from some agencies which been less centrally involved to date, and provide evidence of a return on investment to other stakeholders.

plusone mentoring shows significant evidence of changing attitudes and behaviours, thus reducing risk factors for future offending among a key client group of young people. It has been successful in building local community engagement with young people, through recruitment of a range of volunteer mentors, and in developing an understanding of the lives of these young people. *plusone mentoring* has successfully developed a multi-agency partnership approach. This can be strengthened further with greater communication of the outcomes of *plusone mentoring* to stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Background to the report*

plusone mentoring is an early intervention programme that uses a voluntary mentoring approach to engage with young people aged mainly 8-14 who have been deemed at risk of progressing through the justice system. In January 2011, the Oversight Group of the *plusone mentoring* project comprising YMCA Scotland, Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) and Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), commissioned a team of researchers (Dr Donna Marie Brown, Dr Fiona M. Smith, Dr Lorraine van Blerk and Matej Blazek) from the School of the Environment at the University of Dundee in association with the Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR) to complete an evaluation of the programme.

In relation to *plusone mentoring*, the report addresses the following questions:

- Are we able to see some evidence of changing attitudes and behaviours that might point us firmly towards successful diversion from crime?

- Are we able to identify value in building local community engagement with and improving attitudes towards vulnerable young people?

- Are we able to judge the success of and future challenges in the new partnership approaches used by *plusone mentoring* (i.e. the referral groups and ongoing partner communication, feedback into the 'system' about interventions and subsequent response, strengths and weaknesses of this 'best practice' approach)?

- Can *plusone mentoring* provide an effective alternative to statutory provision for these young people? Can the programme provide an alternative that saves money against expected destinations and build

value in terms of the local community, and in the process save statutory colleagues' time and effort to focus on other priorities?

A parallel and independent evaluation of the project investigating the Social Return on Investment (SROI) has been undertaken by Haldane Associates (hereafter referred to as the *SROI Report*). We make reference to this report where appropriate in order to provide related evidence to our key findings.

1.2. *Programme policy context*

plusone mentoring is an early intervention programme combining the *School, Social Work, Police and Community* (SSPC[1]) approach (Hurley *et al.* 2008) and experiences from a pilot mentoring programme run by YMCA Scotland in the Scottish Borders that emphasises community involvement and responsive practice in work with young people.

plusone mentoring adheres to the national policy *Getting It Right For Every Child* (Scottish Government 2008a) by using a child-centred approach in which coordination among all agencies that 'support the delivery of appropriate, proportionate and timely help to all children as they need it[2]' is a key principle. More specifically, *plusone mentoring* contributes to a wider policy agenda of reducing crime, drawing on the principles included in *Early And Effective Intervention* (Scottish Government 2009) and *Preventing Offending By Young People: A Framework for Action* (Scottish Government 2008b), especially by using multi-agency involvement at the right moment based on an assessment of young

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[1] SSPC is an adaptation of the SSP (School, Social Work and Police) model from Denmark that aims to engage with young people directly in their communities while reporting to SSP co-ordinators. It was firstly implemented in Scotland in East Renfrewshire in 2006 (Hurley *et al.* 2008) where it was evaluated as contributing significantly to tackling anti-social behaviour and decreasing the number of persistent offenders (Bunt and Harris 2010).

[2] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrensservices/girfec/programme-overview.

people's individual circumstances that increase their risk of offending (Hughes and Prior 2008, Morris 2008). The programme also operates within a long-standing tradition in Scotland that highlights the needs of children, adopts a preventive approach and provides a response that integrates child protection and youth justice elements within a single operational framework rather than relying on criminal procedures in coping with young people's offending (Kilbrandon Report 1964, Lockyer and Stone 1998, Moore and Whyte 1998, Whyte 2007, McNeill and Whyte 2007, McQueen *et al.* 2007).

The programme explores new, and advances existing, models of policy delivery. First, it contributes to developing 'justice reinvestment' approaches (Allen and Stern 2007, House of Commons 2010) that invest in building community capacities rather than in penal solutions, and explores their effectiveness in tackling offending among young people. Second, it draws on, as well as builds, the human capital and capacities of volunteers from local communities. This contributes to debates about whether, by investing in communities, there is scope for local populations and/or the voluntary sector to contribute to service delivery or to provide alternatives to statutory services[3] (Scottish Government 2006, Bunt *et al.* 2010). Third, the *plusone mentoring* approach is explicit in drawing on a youth work approach by putting young people's experience, needs and potential at the centre of its work and engaging young people in a participatory, empowering, informal and voluntary way, in order to both involve adult members of communities in the process and to deliver appropriate services to vulnerable young people. Fourth, it contributes to the ongoing evaluative debates about multi-agency early intervention and prevention approaches (Liddle and Gelsthorpe 1994, Jamieson 2005, HMIC *et al.* 2010) by examining the

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[3] According to Principle 3 of the *Volunteering Charter* agreed by Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) and the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) on 25th January 2011, 'the involvement of volunteers should add value to and support the work of paid staff, and should not be used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service'.

role and potential of voluntary community-based agencies in reducing young people's offending behaviour (Ashford 2007).

1.3. *Programme setting*

The programme takes place in three localities – Bellshill (North Lanarkshire), Perth (Perth and Kinross) and Kirkcaldy/Levenmouth (Fife). The lead officers of the programme working at the national level in the Oversight Group are representatives of YMCA Scotland, ADSW and VRU. The programme is coordinated from local YMCA centres in Bellshill, Perth and Kirkcaldy where Programme Managers are responsible solely for *plusone mentoring* in the locality. They are responsible for liaising with referral agencies at the local level, for recruiting, training and supervising volunteers, for liaising with young people and their families when they are referred to the programme and for ongoing monitoring of the mentoring process. Funding for two years from September 2009 has been provided jointly by VRU and the Local Authorities in three areas where *plusone mentoring* is running[4].

1.4. *Programme approach*

The core principles of *plusone mentoring* are based on the philosophies of long-term community-based early intervention and a youth work approach that uses mentoring as the method for delivering appropriate and timely services to young people who are at risk of future offending. Following the work of Whyte (2009), the programme draws on existing evidence that there are several risk factors for future offending that can be tackled at a young age, including the lack of social bonds, low self-esteem, poor self-governance, substance misuse, disruptive family circumstances, aggression and violent behaviour, persistent attention seeking, truancy, or challenging behaviour in school, home and community (e.g. Farrington 1996, Maguin and Loeber 1996, Wasserman *et al.* 2003, Whyte 2004).

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[4] See *SROI Report* for further details.

The programme is based around the rationale that those who first offend at a young age are more prone to become persistent offenders and therefore appropriate early intervention is instrumental in juvenile crime prevention (Rutter *et al.* 1998, McGarrell 2001, McAra and McVie 2007).

The programme draws on the evidence that complex intervention in key domains of young people's development is an instrumental factor in reducing the likelihood of offending. These domains include family, community, and school relationships and behaviour, self-esteem and perception, and the development of social and learning skills (Beinart *et al.* 2002, Farrington and Welsh 2003). The underlying philosophy of the programme is that the nature of the risk factors means that long-term engagement is required in order to make the programme and the possibility of it influencing positive change more sustainable (Grossman and Rhodes 2002, Jekielek *et al.* 2002). In addition, the programme aims to enable each young person to 'stand on their own feet' and not to make them dependent on the support received from the programme. Thus, while the process is seen to require long-term commitment, it is also designed to be one which leads to independence and self-reliance for the young person. It is this which is deemed to provide long-term sustainable outcomes for the young person.

Although the idea of mentoring has been sometimes criticised for lacking a clear definition and meaning (Roberts 2000, Hall 2003), *plusone mentoring* operates within a clearly defined framework that links mentoring praxis with the youth work approach. In its internal training materials, YMCA Scotland defines mentoring as a process of interpersonal help in another person's development and growth in a safe and supportive relationship. Key attributes and activities of youth mentors include[5]:

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[5] Adapted from *plusone mentoring's* training packs for mentors in Perth and Kirkcaldy/Levenmouth.

- Giving help and support in a nonthreatening way, in a manner that the recipient will appreciate and value and that will empower them to move forward confidently

- Creating an informal environment in which a young person can feel encouraged to discuss their needs and circumstances openly and in confidence with another person who is in a position to be a positive help to them

- Developing a long-term, non-judgemental, supportive, encouraging, open, and non-directive relationship with the young person.

The programme manual expects the volunteer mentors to avoid[6]:

- Dealing with deep and difficult problems of the young people for which they are not qualified (in which case they should report the situation to the Programme Manager who will contact the appropriate agency)

- Telling the young person what to do instead of helping to explore the opportunities with the young person

- Doing things for the young person instead of helping them to achieve their goals

- Involving the young person in their own problems, creating false expectations or getting too emotionally involved.

A key aspiration of *plusone mentoring* is to involve a wide range of volunteers from the local community as mentors in order to develop community capacity to provide a model of early intervention. The programme, therefore, does not expect mentors to have prior qualifications or experience in mentoring or youth work. Instead, long-term commitment, personal qualities (especially empathy,

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[6] Ibid.

engagement, and a non-judgemental approach) and completion of disclosure checks are the key requirements.

During the mentoring process, young people who are referred through a multi-agency referral group[7] in the local area are then matched with a volunteer mentor. Due to the principle of long-term commitment, mentors usually commit to being involved for at least 12 months. Young people and mentors meet regularly, usually once a week for two hours. Young people's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary and they have a right to stop participating at any point. The content of their meetings is agreed by the mentor and the young person, and usually includes a mix of recreational activities and talking. The mentors then report the content of the meetings to the local Programme Managers, who monitor the relationship and in turn communicate with other institutional partners as appropriate.

The programme deliberately targets young people at a high risk of future offending, including many with an existing history of offending. However, the youth work and non-interventionist approach which underpins the project means that the mentoring relationship is not necessarily focused on the young person's history of offending or anti-social behaviour. Instead, mentors aim to encourage young people to set goals that can be related to any area of their well-being (behaviour in school, community or at home, but also school attendance and performance, family relationships, self-esteem, fitness, and others) and support them in achieving these. By supporting young people's development of their well-being in an empowering way, *plusone mentoring* also aims to eliminate the risk of future offending.

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[7] Depending on the local area, the referral groups include representatives from the Police, Social Work (Social Work Criminal Justice and/or Social Work Children and Families teams), NHS, Education Departments and Schools, Community Wardens, but also other agencies such as Sacro. In two cases, *plusone mentoring* joined the existing referral groups. In one case, the establishment of the referral group was driven by the initiative of *plusone mentoring*.

There is a distinct lack of literature exploring the potential impact of mentoring on crime prevention. The majority of existing studies about the impact of mentoring focus on projects that engage with older young people and concentrate on areas such as employability or education (Ford 1998). Of the work that focuses on mentoring with younger children, a significant attention has been given to school-based rather than to community-based mentoring (Hylan and Postlethwaite 1998, St James-Roberts and Samlal Singh 2001) and on the quality and process of mentoring rather than on its impact (Brady *et al.* 2005). As Hall (2003) emphasises, most of the existing studies of youth mentoring come from the US context (Dubois *et al.* 2002) and there is a distinct absence of a reflective engagement with the social impact of mentoring, particularly in the UK (Philip 2000). From this perspective, this report (along with the *SROI Report*) seeks to address this gap and contributes to the evidence base about the social impact of youth mentoring.

1.5. *Methodology*

For the project, we used a mixed methodology that puts young people's perspectives at the centre of the research (Barker 2008, van Blerk and Kesby 2009). This included interviews with the key stakeholders (young people, mentors, Programme Managers, Oversight Group members, key Referral Group members), reviews of the programme documentation (referral forms, scoring sheets and mentoring reports), and academic and policy literature reviews. The project received ethical clearance from the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee and we work in accordance with widely adhered to ethical guidelines for working with young people (see Alderson and Morrow 2011).

1.5.1. Interviews with young people

We conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with young people engaging with *plusone mentoring*, between 4 and 7 from each area, and including 4 female and

11 male participants[8]. Key themes of the interviews were their key experiences of the programme (positive as well as negative), relationship, and dynamics with the mentors, perception of being referred to the programme and perception of the impact of mentoring.

1.5.2. Interviews with mentors

We conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with mentors, between 6 and 7 in each area. Key themes of the interviews included their previous experience in working with young people, motivations for, and expectations of, the mentoring work, experiences with young people in the project, perceived personal benefits, but also broader views on the programme.

1.5.3. Interviews with Programme Managers

Extensive semi-structured interviews with each of the three Programme Managers were focused on themes such as the establishment of the project, Programme Managers' experiences of collaboration with particular stakeholders (other agencies, volunteers, young people and their families, YMCA organisation, Oversight Group), development of the project, perceived limits and threats, organisation and particular strategies for running the programme.

1.5.4. Interviews with the Oversight Group

We conducted semi-structured interviews with all three Oversight Group members. Key areas of inquiry included their motivations, expectations and experiences of the project, individual roles of their agencies in the project, and the broader policy context of their involvement.

1.5.5. Interviews with key Referral Groups members

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the chairs of all three Referral Groups. Group interviews were undertaken in two areas with other key

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[8] This reflects that the majority of the young people taking part in the project were male.

members of the Referral Groups, as they were identified and approached by the Referral Group chairs. Individual interviews with two key members of the Referral Group took place in the third area. Key areas of inquiry included motivations, expectations and experiences from their engagement with *plusone mentoring*, areas of involvement and cooperation, similar experiences with other relevant projects, and possible areas for developing the collaboration.

1.5.6. Referral forms, scoring sheets, review forms, mentoring reports, and other documents

We reviewed all referral forms and scoring sheets for the young people in the programme that were available at the time of the research, that is 47 files in total. We also reviewed in detail mentoring reports from individual meetings between mentors and young people in one area. Other documents included in the analysis include training materials and guidelines for mentors, local policy materials provided by Referral Group chairs, and materials about other activities provided by local YMCA centres that the young people involved in *plusone mentoring* also participate in.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

- **The referral process of *plusone mentoring* targets a group of young people aged 14 and below who are at considerable risk of future offending.**

- **Young people referred to *plusone mentoring* have a high level of risk assessed in multiple areas of wider need, including their behaviour and history of offending, family circumstances, community influence, educational performance and attendance, and attitude to offending.**

- **In March 2011, 43 young people were in active engagement with the project and 11 were either waiting to be matched with their mentor or going through the referral process. 55 young people have actively worked with their mentor since the programme started.**

plusone mentoring aims to address a 'high tariff' group of young people, i.e. those who are at high risk of future offending. At the same time, *plusone mentoring* aims to work with young people aged between 8 and 14, as they are deemed to be more prone to become persistent offenders if they already have a history of offending and anti-social behaviour at this age. For this group, the approaches of prevention and early intervention are seen to be more effective than intervention through the penal system (Whyte 2004).

Between October 2009, when the referral process started, and March 2011, a total number of 96 referrals have been made to the project. Of this 96, 43 were in active engagement at the beginning of March 2011[9]. 13 others were at the initial stages of involvement (waiting to be matched with a mentor or going

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[9] Due to the dynamic nature of the programme, the numbers of involved young people fluctuate. We provide numbers as of 4th March 2011 and according to the official status of the cases provided to the research team.

through the referral process). 14 young people were no longer involved in the project – in 4 cases they moved away from the pilot areas or into foster care; in 2 cases YMCA withdrew when the situation required involvement of other agencies due to the severe issues facing the young person; and in 8 cases young people stopped engaging with their mentor (in 4 cases, this happened within the first 6 weeks of the engagement). 13 referrals were deemed inappropriate for the *plusone mentoring* project and were referred on to other agencies. In 13 cases young people or their families declined the offer to engage.

The number of young people referred within each area has been approximately one third of all referrals. The number of actively engaged young people in March 2011 was between 10 and 20 in each area and approximately one third of all young people were involved in interviews as part of the evaluation process. We analysed case files for 47 young people, 40 of whom were actively engaging in the project and 7 of whom had left the programme.

Of the 47 young people whose cases were reviewed, 10 were female (21%) and 37 were male (79%). Table 1 shows the age of these young people at the time of their referral to *plusone mentoring*:

Table 1 – Age structure of the young people engaging in *plusone mentoring* at the time of their referral

Age	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Number of young people	1	3	5	5	13	11	9

Young people who are referred to *plusone mentoring* are scored in two ways by the agency that makes the referral. The first set of scores represents the level of risk in four areas that can serve as reasons for referral as they were identified by Whyte (e.g. Whyte 2009). These are:

- Offending and Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- Hostile or violent behaviour

- Parenting difficulties

- Substance misuse

Referral agencies can also include other reasons for referral if these are not included in the list. They are scored as 'Others', and included primarily non-attendance at school and vulnerability or conflicts in the community.

Table 2 shows the average assessed value of individual risk factors in the main reasons for referral[10] (1 – little or no risk; 2 – moderate risk; 3 – high risk; 4 – very high risk).

Table 2 – Average values of risk level in the main reasons for referral at the time of referral (47 referrals reviewed)

Reason for referral	Risk level
Parenting difficulties	2.9
Hostile/violent behaviour	2.6
Offending/ASB	2.4
Substance misuse[11]	1.2

The table shows that key reasons for referral included parenting difficulties, hostile or violent behaviour and a history of offending and anti-social behaviour (ASB). Indeed, of the 47 young people, 24 (51%) had had a police record at the time of referral. For 9 young people (19%), the present risk factor of offending and anti-social behaviour was assessed as low, but they were nevertheless

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[10] If two or more agencies provided the referral, we calculated the average risk level value.

[11] In several cases, although there was no substance misuse by the young person, a (verbal) note has been made that this is present in the family and can also be a risk factor for the young person, while no additional quantitative score has been given. For the calculation, we considered this as 'low' risk factor in this category.

referred and accepted to the programme as other factors for future offending were considered to be high or very high. In seven cases, additional reasons for referral beyond the four main ones were mentioned with the risk factor assessed as 'high' or 'very high'.

Another score is given to the level of risk in ten areas of wider need. This initial scoring is undertaken by both the referring agency and by the Programme Manager after the initial home visit to the young person's family. The wider areas of need are:

- Behaviour (history of offending; ASB; challenging behaviour, etc.)

- Lifestyle and living arrangements (cultural factors; leisure/recreation; routine; family makeup and circumstances)

- Family and personal relationships (home, community, school relationships; parenting; peer relations)

- Neighbourhood (ASB; criminal behaviour; community support)

- Attitude to offending or behaviour (as a concern)

- Emotional/mental/physical health

- Education (skills; achievements; attitude; relationships; ambitions)

- Perception of self/others (including motivation to change)

- Substance misuse

- Skills/talents/interests/positive relationships.

Table 3 shows the risk level in areas of wider need[12].

Table 3 – Average values of risk level in the areas of wider need at the time of referral (45 referrals reviewed[13])

Area of wider need	Risk level
Behaviour	3.2
Family and personal relationships	3.2
Lifestyle and living arrangements	3.1
Education	3.0
Neighbourhood	2.8
Attitude to offending or behaviour	2.8
Perception of self/others	2.6
Skills/talents/interests/positive relationships	2.6
Emotional/mental/physical health	2.3
Substance misuse	1.6

The table indicates that the young people referred and accepted onto the programme had high or very high levels of risk in multiple areas of wider need, particularly their behaviour, relationships, living arrangements and family circumstances, education, but also neighbourhood influence, attitude to their behaviour, perception of self and others, and skills or talents. The project aims to accept young people who had high or very high levels of risk in two or more areas, as they were deemed to be at a higher risk of future offending. The data in Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate that the programme meets this aim.

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[12] The initial scoring of the risk level in areas of wider need was undertaken both by the referring agency and by the Programme Manager, but for the purpose of the analysis we considered only the latter as only the Programme Managers provided later scorings and it was deemed important to be able to compare these over time.

[13] In two cases, initial scoring on wider need was not completed. Therefore the number of referrals we reviewed for these statistics is lower than for the risk level in Table 2.

Overall, we can conclude that the referral process of *plusone mentoring* is effectively targeting a group of young people who are at considerable risk of future offending and who are in an age group (8-14) where other studies indicate that early intervention can be instrumental in juvenile crime prevention (Rutter *et al.* 1998, McGarrell 2001, McAra and McVie 2007).

3. DIVERSION FROM CRIME AND OTHER BEHAVIOURS

- **There was either improvement or no deterioration in nine of ten risk factors for over 90% of young people reassessed after at least six months in the project.**

- **Improvement was particularly strong in risk factors associated with young people's behaviour (86% showed improvement); the young people's attitudes to offending and other anti-social behaviours (86%); the level of risk for the young presented by their neighbourhood (64%); and with developing young people's skills and positive relationships (64%).**

- **Fourteen out of fifteen young people interviewed for the project gave *plusone* mentoring a score of at least 8 out of 10 when asked to mark their experience.**

- **Mentors and programme managers identified a focus on building young people's emotional and social skills.**

- **Young people identified mentors as having important roles in providing support, undertaking activities, providing advice and acting as mediators with other institutions.**

3.1. Context

plusone mentoring aims to act through the principle of early intervention towards young people who are at high risk of future offending. It seeks to work along with other supportive processes that take place within families and communities, or are pursued by other institutional agencies. It uses long-term engagement that so that attention can be given to broader issues in young people's lives that are seen as factors which reduce the risk of future offending,

including development of social bonds, self-esteem, self-control, social integration, family cohesion, education and others.

Young people engaging with *plusone mentoring* had been referred to the programme because more than one key risk factor for future offending had been assessed as high or very high, including the history of offending (either by the young person or in their family), disruptive and disrupted families, aggression or bullying at school or in the community, a hostile environment at home and parenting difficulties, or other issues such as substance misuse or health problems. The *risk of future offending* is the crucial factor for referral. Thus one-off offenders are not usually referred to the programme unless other factors are present too. Several young people involved in *plusone mentoring* did not have a history of offending but other factors were deemed to have increased their risk of future offending significantly.

The aims of mentoring in relation to diversion from future offending behaviour are developed individually by each mentor together with the young person, and the Programme Managers are made aware of these goals. In most cases, mentors encourage young people to identify a small number of aims (usually two or three) that they would like to achieve. While in some cases these are directly related to the issue of offending and the process of mentoring focuses on diversion from offending activities, in most cases the mentoring relationship is focused rather on wider factors related to decreasing the *risk* of offending. These include development of positive awareness, self-esteem and self-management, improvement in educational attendance and performance, and development of positive family and peer relations.

Our analysis focuses on two issues. First, we analyse the paths of impact that *plusone mentoring* has on young people. Second, we explore the process of mentoring and relate it to the identified areas of impact.

3.2. Mentoring impact

3.2.1. Identified phases of mentoring impact

In analyzing the mentoring impact, we have identified three phases of the mentoring relationships according to the level and type of the mentoring impact that are characterized by different dynamics of the engagement between the young person and their mentor[14]. We label them the *entry phase, engagement phase* and *established phase*.

The entry phase typically comprises the first two months of mentoring. It is characterised by the developing relationship between the young person and the mentor. The majority of mentors reported that after 3 or 4 weeks of contact they managed to 'break the ice' with their young person. This includes starting to talk about more personal issues and identifying problems that young people would like to address. In this period, young people and their mentors usually also set the goals that the young people want to achieve in the long term.

The engagement phase is a transitional period in which the activities of the mentors and young people are still focused on building their relationship, but more attention is given to the problems of young people as they identify them, and to the process of solving them. In several cases, young people and their mentors begin to focus more on problem-solving in the second month of engagement, while in other cases it can take several months before the relationship is successfully in place.

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[14] In the YMCA training pack for mentors, three phases of mentoring are also identified and named as "the beginning: developing rapport and building trust", "Developing the relationship: working together to reach goals", and "Ending, re-defining and evaluating". These phases focus on the *relationship* between mentors and young people during mentoring while we identified the three phases according to the *impact* that mentoring has at a particular point. However, as we argue here, there is a strong relationship between the impact of mentoring and the relationship between the young person and the mentor.

The established phase is identified as a period of 6 or more months of the mentoring process. 6 months is a benchmark after which positive effects of mentoring can be seen in a majority of cases (see below). Evidence from elsewhere (Jekielek *et al.* 2002) indicates that mentoring brings sustainable effects only after a longer period.

As the project is at a relatively early stage and scoring for only one young person involved in the project for at least 12 months existed at the time of the research, we were unable to extend the analysis and measure the level of impact after a period of more than one year.

3.2.2. Impact in the *established phase*

Young people were reassessed by the local Programme Managers on the ten risk factors outlined in section 2.1 after different periods of involvement in the project. For the purpose of measuring the impact of mentoring in the *established phase*, we assessed 14 individual case files of young people for whom scoring existed after at least 6 months of mentoring (see Table 4). For the subsequent interpretation of these findings, we also analysed the individual case files of other young people who had been involved in the project for at least 6 months, but where no re-scoring was available at the time of the research (a further 8 files).

Table 4 – Duration of mentoring amongst those young people involved for 6 months or more

Duration of mentoring (in months)	6	7	8	9	10	12
Number of young people	4	1	2	3	3	1

Table 5 shows average values of risk levels in ten areas of wider need before the mentoring started and after it had taken place for at least 6 months.

Table 5 – Average values of risk levels in areas of wider need before mentoring and after six or more months of mentoring (14 referrals reviewed)

Area of need	Average risk level before	Average risk level after 6+ months	Difference
Young person's behaviour.	3.4	2.1	**-1.3**
Young person's attitude to offending or behaviour of concern	3.3	2.4	**-0.9**
Family and personal relationships (home, community, school relationships, parenting, peer relations)	3.4	2.8	**-0.6**
Neighbourhood influence (existence of ASB/ criminal behaviour; community support)	3.0	2.4	**-0.6**
Skills/talents/interests/positive relationships	2.9	2.3	**-0.6**
Emotional/mental/physical health	2.9	2.3	**-0.6**
Education (skills; achievements; attitudes; ambitions)	3.0	2.6	**-0.4**
Lifestyle and living arrangements (cultural factors; leisure/recreation; family makeup and circumstances)	3.4	3.0	**-0.4**
Substance misuse	2.1	1.6	**-0.4**
Perception of self/others (including motivation to change)	2.6	2.4	**-0.2**

Table 6 shows the changes in scores for the young people whose last scoring took place after at least 6 months of involvement in the programme.

Table 6 – Assessed changes in risk factors after 6 months or more of mentoring (% of young people in that category; 14 referrals reviewed)

Area of need	Improvement	No change	Deterioration
Young person's attitude to offending or behaviour of concern	86	14	0
Young person's behaviour	86	7	7
Neighbourhood influence (existence of ASB/ criminal behaviour; community support)	64	29	7
Skills/talents/interests/positive relationships	64	29	7
Family and personal relationships (home, community, school relationships, parenting, peer relations)	50	50	0
Emotional/mental/physical health	50	43	7
Education (skills; achievements; attitudes; ambitions)	50	29	21
Lifestyle and living arrangements (cultural factors; leisure/recreation; family makeup and circumstances)	36	64	0
Substance misuse	36	57	7
Perception of self/others (including motivation to change)	29	64	7

What emerges from both tables is the noticeable increase in the level of improvement across the range of measures. Substantial improvement can be seen in several key areas:

- Behaviour (86%, risk level decreased by 1.3)

- Attitude to offending (86%, risk level decreased by 0.9)

- Relationships in their neighbourhood (64%, risk level decreased by 0.6)

- Development of their skills, talents or positive relationships (64%, risk level decreased by 0.6).

In all of these areas, very little or no deterioration was recorded.

While 13 of 14 young people had their risk level in the area of behaviour assessed as 'high' or 'very high' before joining the programme, only in 3 cases was the risk considered high or very high in the last scoring. All these 3 young people had been engaging with *plusone mentoring* only for 6 months and for 2 of them the risk level value has been decreased and improvement has been recorded in most other areas.

Areas that are more difficult for mentors to affect directly, i.e. lifestyle and living arrangements, family and personal relationships, and education, are areas with the highest risk value even after a longer period of mentoring. However, at least no further deterioration has been recorded in the areas of young people's relationships and lifestyle arrangements, and to a lesser extent also in education. Case files indicate that improvements have been made in several cases.

Education is an area where young people experience very difficult situations. The *SROI Report* indicates that 17 young people matched with mentors had a history of school exclusions, 21 had poor school attendance, and 19 were referred by their school for problems such as disruptive or violent behaviour, exclusions or poor attendance. There were several cases where a positive change was recorded, resulting in increased attendance, improved performance, or simply a return to school. In other cases, mentors or Programme Managers assisted the young person to find an alternative placement, such as helping to change school, or providing an alternative opportunity through non-mainstream education in another institution (including the local YMCA centre). It is important to note that the change in the area of education is very individual and highly dependent on the existence of other factors and opportunities that mentors cannot provide. in

a small number of cases they were unable to prevent young people dropping out from education entirely, especially in what was a relatively short time, but could work with young people to reengage with education in some form as mentoring progressed.

Health was an area of relatively minor concern as compared to other areas of need and either improvement or no change has been recorded in the majority of cases. Only 5 young persons in this group had the risk level in the area of substance misuse assessed as 'high' or 'very high' and in 3 of those cases an improvement has been recorded, while no change and deterioration took place in 1 case each.

Perception of self and others and the motivation to change is the area with the lowest level of positive change. This can be attributed to the very low level of self-esteem that is characteristic of the young people engaging with *plusone mentoring.* The formation of self-esteem is also dependent on young people's positive experiences of their achievements (Mruk 1995) which are only built up over a longer period of mentoring.

3.2.3. Impact in the *engagement phase*

A majority of young people (45 case files) were rescored after 6 weeks of their engagement with *plusone mentoring* in all 10 areas of wider need. The scoring data show that changes in the risk factors within such a short period are rather minor and cannot necessarily be attributed to the effects of mentoring. Despite this, there was noticeable change in the area of young people's behaviour where the risk level had decreased by 43% and deterioration happened only in 14% of cases. We perceive this change to be significant and attribute it to the development of the relationship between mentors and young people at this point. Most mentors, as well as young people, report that by this time their relationship is relatively well developed and they begin to focus more on young people's problems. In many cases, this includes setting goals that directly

address young people's behaviour, such as avoiding conflicts or other forms of violent or inappropriate behaviour. The positive experience of the activity where mentoring takes place is also an important factor here as it serves as a diversion from offending behaviour (WACOSS 2005, see also section 3.3.3).

Because of the very small sample of young people who had been involved in the programme for between 2 and 6 months at the time of their last scoring (only 8 scored young persons and 3 more case files without scoring), we focused on a more qualitative analysis of this group of mentees.

This group provides mixed results. A positive change across a range of scores, comparable to the group of young people involved in the programme for six months and more, can be seen in four cases. Only modest progress in some scores (particularly behaviour) and no change or deterioration in others was recorded for other young people. Three of the four cases where either YMCA terminated the contact and referred the young person onto other agencies, or the young person withdrew from the programme after more than six weeks, also happened within this period. In another case, new circumstances were identified that led to reconsidering mentoring as an appropriate approach although no change had been implemented at the time of the research.

These findings suggest that while six months can be seen as a benchmark after which positive effects of mentoring usually take place, in some cases the positive impact can take place much earlier. In one case an improvement in four of the key areas of concern (behaviour, neighbourhood influence, lifestyle arrangements and education) could be seen already after only two months of mentoring.

In addition, this is also the period where a sufficient amount of knowledge and experience is gained by the mentor and Programme Manager in order to assess whether mentoring is the most suitable approach for the young person, but also

for the young person to see if they are happy with the arrangements of *plusone mentoring*.

It would be useful to observe the change in risk levels in the next few months particularly for those young people who have demonstrated a turbulent overall progress in order to see whether overall improvement can be confirmed after a longer period.

3.2.4. Impact in the *entry phase*

Table 7 – Assessed changes in risk factors after the initial 6 weeks of mentoring (% of young people in that category; 37 referrals reviewed)

Area of need	Improvement	No change	Deterioration
Young person's behaviour	43	43	14
Neighbourhood influence (existence of ASB/ criminal behaviour; community support)	27	62	11
Education (skills; achievements; attitudes; ambitions)	19	51	30
Young person's attitude to offending or behaviour of concern	16	76	8
Skills/talents/interests/positive relationships	14	75	11
Substance misuse	14	78	8
Emotional/mental/physical health	11	73	16
Perception of self/others (including motivation to change)	11	84	5
Lifestyle and living arrangements (cultural factors; leisure/recreation; family makeup and circumstances)	11	86	3
Family and personal relationships (home, community, school relationships, parenting, peer relations)	11	67	22

As would be expected, Table 7 shows that most changes after the initial six week period of mentoring are minor. However, there is some evidence that even this

early experience of being placed with a mentor produces positive changes in young people's behaviour. Interviews with mentors and young people attribute this to an initial 'breakthrough' in their relationship (see Section 3.3.3).

3.2.5. Assessment

Our findings show that mentoring is making a substantial difference in reducing risk factors across a wide range of measures for young people who are at high risk of offending behaviour. Young people engaging with *plusone mentoring* for six months or more demonstrated either improvement or non-deterioration in all areas of wider need apart from one in over 90% of cases and over 75% of young people showed this in all factors.

These findings suggest that the approach to understanding mentoring as a longer-term process rather than a one-off event is a valuable one. This conclusion confirms findings from other research (Grossman and Rhodes 2002, DuBois *et al.* 2002, Hall 2003) and highlights the need for *plusone mentoring* to have a long-term commitment.

The holistic approach to mentoring employed by *plusone mentoring* shows that the first areas where clear improvement can be seen include young people's behaviour, awareness, and social relationships, particularly in the community and family. This makes *plusone mentoring* different from other mentoring approaches, especially those working with older young people that are focused more specifically and show improvement in specific areas such as education or employability but only limited achievements in the areas of emotional adjustment or social competence (DuBois *et al.* 2002). The evaluation also shows that areas where mentors do not intervene directly (such as school or family arrangements) are also positively affected by mentoring in the longer term.

The research also shows that young people's behaviour can be already improved relatively quickly, after the relationship between the young person and their mentor is put in place. However, other risk factors need more time to be

successfully addressed, highlighting that long-term engagement is essential. This is to be expected given the deep-rooted nature of some of these issues.

In addition, the findings suggest that the period between two and six months of the mentoring process is crucial for revealing whether mentoring is a suitable alternative for each individual young person's situation or whether alternative services which provide specialist assistance or support should be employed.

Because the maximum time that any young person has been engaged in *plusone mentoring* thus far is twelve months, we are unable to provide direct evidence of the sustainability of the mentoring impact. Only a small number of young people had had their contact with mentors reduced from once a week to once a month or fortnight after their risk factor levels were lowered. This happened only recently and we do not have sufficient data to evaluate the permanence of this change. However, the *SROI Report* draws on anecdotal evidence from YMCA's pilot in the Scottish Borders to identify that positive outcomes for young people have been sustained for at least four years after mentoring has been completed. This leads to the conclusion that similar results would be noted for *plusone mentoring* after a comparable period of time, although this cannot be evidenced at this stage in the life of the project. Future monitoring of young people leaving *plusone mentoring* is required to evidence this.

3.3.   Process of mentoring

3.3.1. The mentoring relationship

The youth work approach of *plusone mentoring* means that mentors seek to develop a relationship that is based on a partnership with young people, on their voluntary participation, progressive empowerment and on an informal and friendly atmosphere in the mentoring process.

In interviews, very few young people expressed their understanding of the programme as an intervention scheme. Several stated that they see that the

mentors 'are helping them', but the focus of this help is seen by the young people as being on their emotional problems, social relationships, or educational issues. Themes of crime prevention or offending were only very rarely mentioned in the interviews with young people.

The motivation of young people's families to engage with *plusone mentoring* comes more often from an awareness of the problems that young people experience[15]. Several parents or guardians had expressed to mentors or Programme Managers their motivation to tackle the problems raised in the referrals.

Among the young people interviewed, and who had been involved in *plusone mentoring* for more than three months, the special relationship to the mentor was emphasised in almost all cases. Young people tended to compare the mentors to their experience with other professionals and in some aspects, saw similarities in what the role of the mentor was:

> *'She [the mentor] is here for me [as is my social worker]'*
> (Interview with a young person)

However, when asked about the particular roles of their mentors, young people highlighted the non-judgemental attitude and unconditional support which mentors offered:

> *'I can tell her [the mentor] anything, really, when I have problems,*
> *but also when I am fine, and she will listen and take it.'* (Interview
> with a young person)

Young people expressed their view of mentors as different from how they viewed their parents or other adult family members. Mentors were seen rather

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[15] The research did not include interviews with young people's family members. This conclusion comes from the reflections provided by mentors and Programme Managers on their communication with the families and is confirmed in the *SROI Report*.

as 'friends', but all interviewed young people clearly articulated their awareness and respect of the boundaries that mentors maintain in their relationship with the young person. When asked about comparing mentors to their friends, the young people emphasised the 'maturity' of their mentors, i.e. the fact that they were adults and were able 'to understand better' or 'to provide support' that young people would not look for, or perhaps find among their peers:

> *'[Is it different to talk to [your mentor] than to your pals?] Oh yeah, it's different. He's an adult. He knows things my pals don't. So he can tell me things my pals wouldn't have heard about.'* (Interview with a young person)

A number of the young people stated that they had few friends. In this case they saw their mentor as their key, if not their only, social and emotional contact beyond their family. (Indeed in some cases the young people felt that social and emotional contact was also missing in their family too, making the role of the mentor even more significant).

> *'[What is your favourite memory of being with [the mentor]?] We went for a day trip with others from YMCA. [Why this one?] Because I was away from home.'* (Interview with a young person)

In terms of what motivated them to join the *plusone mentoring* project, the majority of young people interviewed stated that they had not been motivated to join in order to make a specific change in their behaviour or situation (such as offending behaviour). Rather their initial attitude was an ambivalent one and they followed the suggestions of their parents or guardians about joining. However, although many young people mentioned that they felt nervous at the beginning of the process, all stated that the voluntary nature of the programme had been emphasised to them and they did not feel pressure to join the programme (neither from YMCA nor from their families).

'[So what did you expect from mentoring when you signed up?] I don't know. I didn't think about that, my mum told me about it but I didn't know what to expect. [So was it your mum's idea to take part rather than yours?] Yeah, I guess so... [Weren't you nervous about being with someone new?] Yeah, at the beginning, but [the Programme Manager] came to our house and explained. And it went ok, from the first meeting.' (Interview with a young person)

This suggests that the initial approach from the local Programme Managers had made it clear to young people that their involvement was voluntary and that young people did not view *plusone mentoring* as an intervention to address specific behaviour but as an opportunity for wider engagement with an interested and supportive adult.

When asked to 'give a mark out of 10' to their experience with *plusone mentoring*, 14 out of 15 young people interviewed gave a value of 8 or more. Factors which they gave to explain the mark were that:

- They enjoyed activities with the mentor and the fact that they had a free choice.

- Meetings provided a chance to 'talk' in a safe environment, either about serious problems or about relatively problem-free themes, depending on young people's preferences.

- All young people also mentioned getting on well with their mentor and, having managed to 'break the ice' relatively quickly (within two months – as the mentoring reports also evidence), saw it as a positive experience.

When we asked what would have to happen to give the experience an even higher mark, the young people mentioned various individual reasons, from the mentor having a new car, to higher frequency of the meetings. More than half of

all young people gave a mark of 9 or 10 and said that they were perfectly happy with their experience.

The findings demonstrate that Programme Managers and mentors are successful and effective in establishing relationships with young people engaging with *plusone mentoring* and that the mentoring model is clearly being understood and positively regarded by young people in their experience of the programme. Young people especially acknowledge the non-judgemental and supportive attitude of the mentors and the voluntary nature of their own participation that motivates them to engage more with their mentors and to address some of the more difficult situations they experience.

Areas where mentoring can be seen to have a practical impact that reduces the risk factors for future offending are outlined in the following five sections:

3.3.2. Developing emotional and social skills in young people

Drawing on evidence from referral forms, mentors, Programme Managers and interviews with young people, it is clear that many of the young people who are referred to *plusone mentoring* have very low self-esteem and struggle in everyday social relationships, including family, school, and community, as well as in relationships with other professionals and statutory agencies. The behaviour of many of them in social relationships is characterised either by aggression/dominance or submissiveness, in some cases even by both, depending on the particular relationships of the young people.

A majority of mentors we interviewed reported considerable improvement in this for the young person they mentored. They – as well as the Programme Managers – highlighted young people's increasing ability to relate to, and open up to, other people (even if only to a small degree).

'You wouldn't believe if you saw him a few months ago. He would just stare to the wall. He still doesn't talk much now, but he will reply and they get on very well [he and his mentor].' (Conversation with a Programme Manager about a young person)

Several young people, when asked about any change they experienced after they joined the mentoring programme, mentioned that their families or people at school had noticed the positive change.

'I get into fights much less now. I've learnt to avoid them. [Did someone else, for instance your teachers, notice this too?] Oh yeah, they did. They also told my mum, that's what she said to me.' (Interview with a young person)

A major factor in increasing the emotional and social skills of the young people is the appropriate matching of the young person and the mentor. Programme Managers reported using a number of criteria for this, such as age, gender, personal interests, character, and location or mobility of the mentors. The vast majority of participants, including the mentors, young people and the Programme Managers, talked very positively about the arrangements and no change in mentoring partnerships had happened unless the mentors had to leave the project due to personal circumstances.

We conclude that *plusone* mentoring has been very successful in developing young people's social and emotional skills and resilience and several young people experience this change through receiving positive reactions from other people. Programme Managers have been highly successful in matching young people with appropriate mentors and this has, in turn, been instrumental for the positive development of young people's social and emotional skills.

3.3.3. Diverting young people from risk of offending behaviours

For young people, the lack of creative opportunities or appropriate facilities in their everyday environment can have a significant impact on their activities and can be a factor for offending (Adamson 2003). Some young people mentioned a total lack of opportunities for leisure time activities in their communities. Their weekly meetings with mentors were seen by them as the only positive option they had. Thus mentoring was an important counter-measure to an absence of opportunities for these young people. Several other young people had (and were aware of) organised activities or facilities in their communities, but they were either not confident enough to attend these or had no friends to accompany them, or they lacked family support in attending the activities. In these cases, the company of the mentor was crucial in engaging positively in safe activities.

> *'Oh, [the young person] is excellent in football, really. I asked him why would he not join a local team but he said that he "did not wish to" and rather would play with me. I did not press but last time we talked about it, [the young person] agreed to have a look so I want to take him once it is warmer.'* (Interview with a mentor)

For other young people, it was the chance to talk about, or even deal with, their problems through their *plusone mentoring* meetings that was the main area of their relationship with the mentor. These young people saw meeting once a week (as they did already) as sufficient. In contrast, those young people who most valued doing activities with their mentors more often mentioned that they would like to have more frequent meetings with the mentor (at least twice a week).

> *'I am aware of my problem...But when I am in our neighbourhood, I will do these things again [referring to anti-social behaviour] because there is nothing else you can do there, nowhere to*

go...When I'm with [the mentor] it's good... But it's not enough.'

(Interview with a young person)

This young person was mentioned by the Programme Manager and their mentor as behaving very well in the company of their mentor and outside of their home community[16]. This young person struggled with his behaviour due to what he saw as a lack of positive opportunities in his community but he was highly interested in the activities undertaken with the mentor (such as playing pool or riding carts) and would be happy to engage more often with him.

A key area of *plusone mentoring* is the young people's positive experience of diversionary activities with mentors. This is especially important for young people from areas with few opportunities, or where their social circumstances make it difficult for them to access such opportunities. These young people are especially put at risk by current and future cuts in provision of youth services by local authorities.

3.3.4. Advisory role of mentors

In a number of cases, young people highlighted above all the impact that practical advice from their mentors had had on their situation. Such cases included:

- A young person who did not attend school and who was informed by the mentor about the opportunities for vocational training in the area and was supported by the mentor in accessing and attending this.

- A young person who said he was often wrongly accused of anti-social behaviour in his community by his peers and consequently blamed by the

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[16] Crucially, this was reported to be the case for the vast majority of all young people involved in *plusone mentoring*.

police. In this case, the mentor helped the young person to develop arguments and show evidence that would prove his lack of involvement, and especially encouraged him to try and confront the accusations.

- A young person who had concerns about his fitness and physical health took advice about physical exercise from his mentor.

In these cases, and others, the young people highlighted the advice from their mentors as absolutely central to their experience, along with the support they received from their mentors afterwards.

> *'[What is the best thing about having a mentor?] That she helped me to get to the college. [Why this one?] It's absolutely great and I wouldn't do it without her.'* (Interview with a young person)

The capacity of the mentors to advise the young people in their practical problems was the key positive experience for several young people engaging with *plusone mentoring*. Thus, the positive impact of mentoring can be seen as a combination of a supportive attitude and appropriate knowledge that the mentors (or the Programme Managers who advise the mentors) have about the problems of the young person and practical efforts to improve the situation for the young person.

3.3.5. Institutional mediation

Another area highlighted by several stakeholders was the impact that the programme had on mediating the contact between the young people and other agencies. In several cases, this included direct mediation such as when:

- A mentor mediated with a local sports club from which the young person had been expelled for bad behaviour.

- A Programme Manager communicated about access to another school after the young person had been expelled.

- A mentor accompanied a young person to school after dropping out because of being bullied and offered to talk to the head teacher or other key persons on the young person's behalf.

In all such cases, mentors responded to the ideas that young people themselves were unable or unwilling to take further.

'It was clear that he needs to have a regular activity, or activities, in order to keep him away from troubles and I guessed that he was very good in sports so I asked if he did not want to join a local club. He quickly changed the theme so I approached again and finally he told me that he was there some time ago but they expelled him because of behaviour. I suggested to ask them to take him back and finally he agreed… When I came to the club, it was important that I said that I am from YMCA so they gave him another chance seeing that there are other things behind it.' (Interview with a mentor)

In some cases, indirect mediation, that is mediation based on young people's relations to institutions and other figures in general, was also highlighted. One example would be the experience of a Youth Justice Representative on one of the referral panels who stated that several young people involved in *plusone mentoring* related much better to police officers in their communities after talking about their experiences with their mentors.

We conclude that *plusone mentoring* has had a positive impact on young people not only directly, but also by mediating their contact with other institutions that are able to support them.

3.3.6. Other areas of impact

Other areas of impact can also be identified in a small number of cases. These include the involvement of mentors with parents (such as advising the family) or in engaging the young person more broadly in community activities (especially in smaller rural communities). These are not areas of activity in which mentors are expected to focus their actions. However, reflecting on the existing cases of engagement, these aspects have potential to inform the future development of the project.

3.4. Summary points

The findings from the evaluation show that mentoring has had a positive impact on young people's behaviour, perceptions and situations in multiple ways. It has significantly decreased risk factors for future offending and shows evidence of building young people's individual resilience and strengthening their social involvement beyond the mentoring process. Our key findings are:

- Mentoring has the greatest impact on young people in improving their emotional and social skills and their behaviour (at home, school and in the community).

- Among those young people involved for 6 months and more, mentoring has also contributed to improvement in the areas of education and lifestyle arrangements.

- Limited positive impacts of mentoring can be seen after only six weeks, particularly in the area of young people's behaviour. This relates to the developing relationship between young people and their mentors.

- Appropriate matching of mentors with young people is crucial for the development of a positive relationship. This, in turn, is fundamental for a positive impact of mentoring (Hall 2003). *plusone mentoring* has

- demonstrated a very high level of success in matching young people with suitable voluntary mentors.

- Young people engaging with *plusone mentoring* for six and more months demonstrated either improvement or non-deterioration in all areas of wider need apart from one in over 90% of cases and over 75% of young people showed this in all factors

- Young people are very positive about their experience of *plusone mentoring* and give it a high value. This comes partly from their relationship with the mentor and partly from the experience of the activities. For most young people, the mentors are not seen as 'professionals', but rather as adults with an interest in their wellbeing (even 'friends' in many cases) which has a positive effect on the development of their relationship.

- The positive experience of diversionary activities with mentors is a key area of impact. This is especially important for the young people from areas with few opportunities, or where their social circumstances make it difficult for the young person to access them.

- Other key areas of positive impact are the advisory role of the mentors and the mediation of young people's relationship with other institutions.

- Other factors apart from *plusone mentoring* have made a positive impact on young people, especially in the area of education or family arrangements.

3.5. *Recommendations and areas for future development*

- The programme has been very successful in identifying the right young people who might benefit from mentoring and in diverting them from crime by addressing the key risk factors for future offending. It also fits very well with what is perceived as standards of good praxis in youth

mentoring. It has proved to be successfully responding to the national policies of early intervention and integrated child-centred approach to youth justice and child protection. In this regard, we recommend the continuation of its practice and its potential to be used in other areas of Scotland and suggest the following:

- The youth work approach and the flexible and inclusive nature of the programme are essential for making *plusone mentoring* accessible for many young people who are at risk of future offending. Young people, especially those from environmentally deprived communities for whom *plusone mentoring* has a significant role as a diversionary activity, may benefit from additional leisure time opportunities. We recommend that the mentoring process continues to facilitate young people's contact with appropriate provision. The current and future cuts in provision of youth services (see Bunt *et al.* 2010) increase the risk levels for young people and should be mitigated against.

- Experiences from the project show that the holistic and responsive philosophy of *plusone mentoring* entails the potential to identify further areas of intervention. It is a question for further discussion whether *plusone mentoring* can be expanded so the activities of mentors would address directly also families or young people's involvement in communities beyond the individual mediations. This would require increasing resources, skills and human capital of mentors, but also Programme Managers in YMCA.

- Going forward, we recommend monitoring the long-term impact of mentoring on young people after they have completed the programme. This will provide evidence regarding sustainability of the impact of *plusone mentoring* for the young people.

- We find the existing scoring system of the risk levels useful. We recommend assessing young people's risk levels on a regular basis. For long-term monitoring purposes, we recommend each young person is scored at the end of each of the identified key phases (2 months, 6 months and 12 months).

- We highlight the usefulness of the qualitative assessment on young people's progress collated by the Programme Managers and its use in deciding on a course of action. We recommend this continues.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Some 80 volunteers have participated in *plusone* mentoring as mentors over the life of the project so far.**

- **Volunteers value the opportunity to mentor as a means to develop their own skills and/or as a way to engage positively with young people.**

- **The good reputation of the YMCA in local areas has a positive effect on recruiting volunteers to the project.**

- **The project has successfully drawn on volunteers from a range of backgrounds and developed their skills and attitudes towards working with vulnerable young people.**

4.1. Context

One of the key aims of *plusone mentoring* is to contribute to the wider policy agenda of building community capacity by engaging and motivating individuals in the community to learn and apply the necessary skills to support vulnerable young people. Both the *Changing Lives* policy on social work services (Scottish Government 2006) and the *Scottish Volunteering Strategy* (Scottish Government 2004) place emphasis on the value of volunteering in providing services, and the latter discusses the potentially distinctive nature of voluntary sector provision. Thus, while the voluntary nature of mentoring can be seen as a way of increasing the reach towards young people who might be otherwise unwilling to engage with statutory professionals, or to offer the young people a distinctive form of support, it is also an instrument of community capacity building through stimulating the engagement of adult volunteers with young people at risk.

All applicants to be volunteer mentors are required to undertake mentoring training organised by the local YMCAs, but it is made clear to them that afterwards there might not be a suitable young person for them to mentor, or

that they may be seen as unsuitable to mentor. Trainee mentors can also withdraw from the project if they decide mentoring is not for them. Development of further individual skills is understood as a part of the supervised process of being a mentor. The experience of the training was seen, without exception, as a benefit by the applicants.

4.2. Community capacity building

A total number of 80 volunteers have been recruited into the scheme over the life of the project and 49 were active at the beginning of Mach 2011 as mentors or waiting to be matched with a young person. An additional 14 mentors are either in training or are currently awaiting disclosure checks. Only 17 mentors are no longer involved in the project. According to the *SROI Report*, mentors have contributed just under 2,800 hours to *plusone mentoring* valued at over £41,000 for one year of the project.

The data provided by the Programme Managers show that a wide range of recruitment strategies have been applied, including personal contact (either of the Programme Managers or other mentors), advertisements in local press, volunteer centres, posters, YMCA website, networking at universities, or involvement of YMCA staff or young people involved in other YMCA activities. Most volunteers joined the project through personal and informal channels, i.e. through personal contacts of either the Programme Managers or other mentors.

Programme Managers expressed their satisfaction with the level of response from potential volunteers. There was an approximately equal division in the number of mentors between the three areas. There is considerable diversity in the background, experiences and demographic structure of the volunteers applying for a place in *plusone mentoring*. This helps to respond better to the variety of circumstances of individual young people involved in the programme. Mentors come from a range of locations and it is not intended to have mentors

coming from the home neighbourhoods of the young people so as to preserve a distinction between mentoring and other social relationships.

4.2.1. Motivation and personal development

Two key areas of motivation were mentioned by the volunteer mentors. One is the prospect of future career development. Mentors in this group included students in social care, community work or social sciences, but also individuals who are in training as counsellors. The motivation to gain relevant skills in working with people in general and to improve their future career prospects was also mentioned by volunteers who pursue a career in other areas where work with people takes place, such as the police service, marketing and sales, or entrepreneurship. The motivation of future career development was mentioned by mentors from various age groups, including students in their early 20's, but also more mature volunteers (over 40) who are considering changing their career or have already started studies or training in another subject (such as social care or counselling). It is clear, therefore, that mentoring is developing a variety of skills which may improve volunteers' overall employability or the skills they bring to their work.

The second area of motivation for volunteers was to 'give something back' or to 'do something for the young people'. The group of volunteers with this motivation included the older mentors, some of whom were retired, but it was also mentioned as the primary motivation by several younger mentors, including young people in their early 20's who themselves had benefited from similar services. A subset of this group is found among mentors who worked as youth or community workers (in YMCA but also in other institutions), and who saw volunteer mentoring as an opportunity to increase the impact their work has on young people overall by increasing the target group and expanding the methods they use.

The majority of mentors expressed their satisfaction with their personal development experience in the programme. Those mentors who had had less experience in work with young people at risk before joining the programme very positively valued their experiences and the skills they had developed.

> *'[Have you changed since you start your work in plusone mentoring?] Oh, absolutely. I have learnt so much about people, young people particularly, I think in a more complex way what they must live through. It is something that my course would not teach me.'* (Interview with a mentor who is in training in one of the helping professions)

Several experienced mentors also emphasised the development of their skills through the different nature of mentoring as compared to their previous experiences. Key areas of development are:

- One-to-one work in mentoring as opposed to group work with young people

- Work with younger age groups through a similar type of problems that the mentors had experienced with older teenagers

- The way demands in mentoring engage them with the broader context of young people's lives, including their family or school circumstances rather than working with young people only on individual issues.

When asked about why they chose *plusone mentoring* over other voluntary programmes, mentors' key responses were:

- Interest in working one-to-one with young people

- The positive image of YMCA in the community

- The first and/or the only volunteering opportunity they found out (through an advertisement or through the local volunteering centre)

- Positive references from other people who participated in *plusone mentoring*

- Belief that mentoring can be a particularly helpful service for young people in difficult situations.

***plusone mentoring* attracts volunteers with motivations mainly related to 'giving something back to the community' and to improving their future career prospects. *plusone mentoring* had been highly successful in attracting volunteers from the local community through its place and reputation locally.**

4.2.2. Engagement with vulnerable young people

All of the mentors interviewed saw mentoring as an activity that can have a positive impact on young people and is worth pursuing.

> *'[Could any young person benefit from having a mentor?] Oh, absolutely. Me, if I had had a mentor, it would have probably saved me several years of serious trouble.'* (Interview with a mentor)

> *'[Can anyone be a mentor?] Well, everyone should try it at least, it is worth it.'* (Interview with a mentor)

At the same time, the mentors reflected on the development of their own skills and how this affected their attitudes to young people beyond the settings of mentoring:

> *'[Can anyone be a mentor?] Oh yes. But not everyone can be a good mentor. [So what makes a good mentor?] You need to be*

patient. You need to be committed. You cannot judge but must try to understand instead... That's how you can make a difference with the young person.' (Interview with a mentor)

While several other studies reflect on the notion of volunteer mentors developing better understanding of young people's lives (e.g. Brady *et al.* 2005), *plusone mentoring* is unique in that the mentors emphasise engaging with the particularly challenging situations of the young people as a new experience for them.

'[Have you changed since you became a mentor?] Have I changed? I think I began to see better what some young people experience and especially how incredibly difficult some of those things they encounter are. It's something I have not experienced myself, something I'm not sure how I would've responded to.' (Interview with a mentor)

Overall, mentors have clearly understood the emphasis in their training on a youth work approach. They value the experience gained in *plusone mentoring* because it increases their understanding and engagement with young people from particularly challenging backgrounds.

4.2.3. Recruitment and informal networking

Although mentors are recruited to the programme through different channels, the most important one has been informal contact between YMCA or existing mentors and potential applicants. Even those mentors that were not approached about mentoring through informal contacts were mostly recruited through local sources. This includes mentors who saw a poster or advertisement in a local volunteer centre or public notice-board, or those who inquired about

opportunities to volunteer with local agencies and YMCA had been recommended to them.

Several referral group members from partner statutory organisations, but also mentors and the Programme Managers themselves, have emphasised the positive reputation of the local YMCA centres in their communities and the role this has on the recruitment of mentors. The ability to mobilise local sources of human capital can be seen as one of the strengths of the programme as can be the development of skills and attitudes towards working with vulnerable young people. Along with the motivation to 'give something back to the community' mentioned above, this point emphasises also the importance of the voluntary nature of the involvement.

In contrast with other studies that suggest that mentors in the UK are most often recruited from a similar social background (usually white, middle-class women, see Philip, 2000; Golden *et al.*, 2002, Brady *et al.* 2005), *plusone mentoring* is characterized by a more diverse structure of the participating volunteers that spans across the broader age group (19-54), includes mentors of both genders proportionally, and draws volunteers from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including students, professionals from a range of professions and retired persons. This reflects the ongoing impacts of YMCA's engagement with local communities and the transferring of this relationship to the programme.

4.2.4. Working with volunteers in delivering mentoring to the young people

A number of distinct issues arise when services are being delivered using volunteers rather than paid staff. First, almost all interviewed mentors emphasised that it would be difficult for them to find more time to be engaged in volunteering more often or in other kinds of voluntary activities. The existing frequency and length of mentoring relationships was mentioned as acceptable while they thought that additional demands would be difficult to meet. This was

recognised by the Programme Managers who stated advanced training as one of the desirable areas of programme expansion, but they cited the lack of mentors' time as the reason that had until now prevented this.

Second, some mentors stated that they felt that the fact that their involvement is unpaid was positively regarded by the young people, in contrast to paid professionals the young people engaged with. This is a claim that is in accordance with suggestions given in literature elsewhere (Morawska and Sanders 2006, Hayes and Spratt 2009). However, no young person we interviewed mentioned this issue. What this suggests is that rather than understanding their mentor in terms of whether they are a 'paid professional' or an 'unpaid volunteer', it is the personal relationship that the young people develop with their mentor, that was discussed earlier in the report (as a friend, someone who listens, a source of advice), that is central to young people's experiences of the mentoring process.

In addition, the *SROI Report* indicates that the fact that the mentoring service was offered by YMCA and volunteers and not by statutory services was important for young people's families in a positive way. This is important given the fact that young people often participate on the advice of their families (see 3.3.1). There are indications that some families had previously developed difficult or adverse relationships with other professional bodies.

Both Programme Managers and mentors expressed their positive views on the existing recruitment criteria, training programme, and ongoing development, monitoring and supervision. These appear adequate for the demands of the mentor role. The Programme Managers emphasised the important role of the training process not only in terms of delivering the key skills to the volunteers, but also for the chance they then have to get to know the applicants better and to evaluate their capability to be a mentor. Therefore, the Programme Managers unambiguously prefer to lead the whole training process, although they cite the

time demands as one of the difficulties of the programme, especially if only a small number of mentors apply.

Mentors expressed a high level of satisfaction with the training process. They highlighted especially parts about child protection as new to them, and interactive model situations as illuminating or useful for the mentoring role.

There is also some recognition that the voluntary nature of the mentors' involvement raises limits as to what Programme Managers can expect and demand from volunteers. This was partly confirmed by some Programme Managers who admitted that 'they would be more strict in some things with paid employees' but when questioned further this tended to relate primarily to issues such as paperwork. Programme Managers felt that this did not impact on the overall quality of the experience for the young people.

The Programme Managers expressed their satisfaction with the number of volunteers recruited and available for the programme. However, there are some concerns about the flexibility of the approach so in a case when a mentor drops out unexpectedly, there is no adequate alternative available immediately.

These findings show that for young people, the crucial issue is their relationship with their mentor and not the mentor's status as a professional or volunteer. The voluntary nature of involvement can positively affect the attitudes of young people's families towards the project. The voluntary character of mentoring and the lack of previous experiences are not seen as a concern by the Programme Managers or by the mentors themselves.

4.3.   Summary points

The findings from the evaluation show that *plusone mentoring* has been successful in building community capacity, especially by building engagement between adult volunteers and vulnerable young people, and by developing

volunteers' skills in work with young people and their understanding of young people's difficult situations. The following areas of impact on the building of community capacities can be seen in particular:

- The project engages a wide range of individuals with different motivations, and diverse backgrounds or social characteristics and it is widely successful in producing skilled and experienced volunteers highly adept in supporting and engaging with young people at risk.

- There is a high level of satisfaction among the mentors in terms of their expectations and experiences from the programme. Most of them attribute this at least partly to the co-ordinating and supporting role of the Programme Managers.

- The experience in *plusone mentoring* is seen by many mentors as having an important impact on their future career development and influencing their long-term capacity to work with young people experiencing key challenges, but also in other areas. This motivation was mentioned by younger mentors but also by some older ones who are considering changing their career.

- There is a key cohort of volunteers who see *plusone mentoring* as an effective way to engage with vulnerable young people in their community and there is a high level of satisfaction among the mentors in this regard.

- The findings show that the experience of being a mentor has an impact on how adults who are involved shape their views and attitudes towards vulnerable young people, especially those in more complex difficulties.

- *plusone mentoring* (and YMCA) draws primarily on local sources in order to recruit new volunteers and to expand the informal networking in local communities. The existing name of YMCA and of the programme in the communities seems to be important. The Programme Managers

mentioned their ability to recruit new mentors as adequate to the demands.

4.4. *Recommendations and areas for future development*

- We recommend that *plusone mentoring* continues the good practice of recruiting and training volunteer mentors from local communities.

- We recommend that YMCA remains the key provider of *plusone mentoring* because of its established relationships in local communities and its ability to attract a diverse range of volunteers.

- We recommend that volunteers continue to commit to a minimum period of 12 months.

- We recommend that Programme Managers develop a strategy that can be put in place when mentors suddenly leave the project. This would mitigate against any potential negative effects for young people.

- In relation to possible future developments of *plusone mentoring,* interest was expressed by some mentors in expanding their role to more directly address issues in young people's families or communities. As this raises concerns about the safety of the mentors as well as of the young people and their families, and as there are no adequate records of mentoring developing into such as a complex type of support in the literature, we recommend addressing such situations individually. Careful monitoring, advanced training and close engagement with other stakeholders would be needed.

- Initial training for mentors is clearly providing a sound foundation and should be continued. However, many mentors cite the time demands of *plusone mentoring* as being at the limit of their current capacities. Thus any additional training required for the expansion of the mentoring role to include areas mentioned above would need to be carefully negotiated,

and appropriate to the time available to volunteer mentors and Programme Managers. This might involve a wider range of YMCA staff in supervision or training, or employing online/distance learning methods.

5. INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- *plusone mentoring* brings together a range of key professional agencies to take a comprehensive approach to early intervention.

- The services provided by *plusone mentoring* target a distinctive group of users who are not catered for in other programmes in their local areas.

- The partner agencies acknowledge that mentoring is a process not an event and that through longer term multi-institutional engagement, it has the potential to make long term improvements for the young people involved.

- The programme has a potential to draw on its experience with vulnerable young people and inform broader policies and agendas.

5.1. Context

The *plusone mentoring* programme is firmly situated within the multi-agency and child-centred policies that seek to integrate youth justice and child protection approaches. These include the national policy *Getting It Right For Every Child* (Scottish Government 2008a) in which a coordinated approach by all agencies delivering supportive services to children is emphasised, but also more specific policies of timely intervention in early prevention practice with young people in communities, particularly *Early And Effective Intervention* (Scottish Government 2009). *plusone mentoring* has established partnerships with statutory institutions as a non-statutory agency that draws on, and develops, the voluntary capacities of local communities. It contributes to wider policies by addressing the question of community capacities in relation to financial sustainability of public services (Bunt *et al.* 2010) and to debates about 'justice reinvestments' that transfer funding to community-based initiatives rather than to penal procedures within the youth justice system (Allen and Stern 2007). As such, *plusone mentoring* aims to work as part of a whole system of early intervention, with a particular focus

on placing community work and volunteering at the heart of services for young people and their families without undermining the contribution of other professional sectors.

Partnerships established through the *plusone mentoring* programme cross various institutional agencies including Youth Justice, Social Work, Education, Health, Community Wardens, and Sacro but also local community projects and initiatives. An important part of the approach is also the role of partnerships with non-institutional actors such as young people themselves and their families, or volunteers. The following section identifies the key findings:

5.2. *plusone mentoring and multi-agency early-intervention system*

The programme priorities are implemented at a local level through the combined School, Social Work, Police and Community (SSPC) approach and the community-strengthening mentoring approach. The former integrates relevant agencies engaging with young people at risk through the process of shared referrals, coordinated actions and collective reviews. The latter seek to develop partnerships drawing on the potential in communities by involving volunteers from the local area and by building their engagement with vulnerable young people. The findings about the key partnerships and their perceptions are the following:

5.2.1. Programme Managers' views of the local multi-agency partnerships

At the local level, the key partnerships are organized through the referral groups. In two cases, *plusone mentoring* Programme Managers joined the existing youth referral groups, while in one case this was established through the initiative of *plusone mentoring.* Key views of the Programme Managers on the partnerships are:

- In all three areas, Programme Managers gave positive views about the role and activities of the referral groups. They see the referral groups as providing referrals for the right type of young people suitable for the programme.

- Programme Managers find the structure of the referral groups entirely appropriate for the requirements of *plusone mentoring*. They feel that all relevant agencies are involved in the referral group and the framework of the referral group enables them to invite any other agencies as necessary.

- Programme Managers positively appreciated the cooperation with referral group members, particularly with the chairs, whose role is important in addressing other potential partners as they are required.

- Programme Managers also emphasised the importance of individual partnerships with key statutory agencies as the level of involvement varies between agencies and not all are involved with the cases of all young people. In the case of some agencies (Social Work, Education, Health), the Programme Managers highlighted not just the importance of the collaboration with representatives in the referral group, but also the collaboration with individual practitioners working with particular young people who are involved in *plusone mentoring*.

Overall, Programme Managers expressed a high level of satisfaction with their collaboration with the local referral groups. They especially emphasised the support from the referral group chairs and the fact that the collaboration is flexible, can take place at case level, and with those agencies that are involved.

5.2.2. Other agencies' views of *plusone mentoring*

The perception of *plusone mentoring* by the institutional partners within the local referral groups was generally positive, with the degree of positivity

depending on the level of mutual involvement between the individual agencies and *plusone mentoring*. The referral group chairs (who are all based in the Youth Justice field), were very positive about *plusone* mentoring. All mentioned explicitly that the programme has met or exceeded their expectations. Education and community-based partners (such as Community Wardens) were also very appreciative of the programme. Whilst a considerable number of referrals came from Social Work or Health[17], there was less direct engagement between *plusone mentoring* and these agencies.

All referral group chairs viewed *plusone mentoring* as providing a complementary service that fills a fundamental gap in the current system of early intervention. They highlighted especially the following aspects of *plusone mentoring*:

- Work with younger age groups than other statutory agencies (especially police) are expected to work with

- Work with young people (and their families) who are often unwilling to engage with other professionals

- The complex nature of intervention that not only relates the themes of criminal offending and child protection, but also addresses explicitly areas such as self-esteem, social relationships, understanding the consequences of one's behaviour

- The potential of *plusone mentoring* to mediate young people towards other statutory, as well as non-statutory, and community-based agencies, according to their needs and capacities.

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[17] We conducted interviews with representatives of all agencies in the referral group, but not with individual practitioners who are often responsible for communication and coordination with Programme Managers in individual cases.

All institutional partners acknowledge and respect the long-term nature of the mentoring process (the idea of intervention as 'a process' not as 'an event'). They also state that they understand the issue of 'crime' as not necessarily the key problem, even among the young people with records of offending. They support the focus on other aspects such as social and emotional deprivation, or the lack of positive experiences, of which crime may be just a secondary aspect. The partners viewed the flexible and responsive nature of mentoring in responding to the diversity in young people's situations and needs very positively.

We conclude that a high level of engagement can be seen between *plusone mentoring* and relevant statutory agencies, and also individual practitioners cooperating with *plusone mentoring*. The programme is seen as a complementary early intervention service for young people that can be in a long term highly successful in addressing areas such as self-esteem, self-awareness or social relationships, and in this way it can also contribute to the broader aims of prevention.

5.2.3. The role of partnerships in young people's development beyond the programme

A part of the *plusone mentoring* strategy is to assist young people in identifying and engaging with alternative opportunities and services in their communities. Some of those are provided directly by YMCA, such as a development of programmes within the local YMCA centre that focus on the employability of young people, or of individual educational programmes provided by the local YMCA centre that address the specific needs of young people who are unable to engage in mainstream education, including activities with music, social media, manual skills, but also individually tailored learning programmes.

However, YMCA cannot provide such support to all young people engaging with *plusone mentoring* on its own. Some of the YMCA centres currently have capacities more appropriate for work with teenagers rather than younger children, and for a majority of the young people engaging with *plusone mentoring,* the local YMCA centre is out of reach because of its location. In response to this, there is a strong focus among Programme Managers and mentors on providing young people with assistance in looking for other local opportunities.

Some of the agency partners also raised the theme of young people's transition to the labour market, and more generally of the difference in working with older teenagers rather than with younger children and the response this would require from *plusone mentoring*. While the first theme is addressed individually through looking for local opportunities, the latter theme has not become an issue in many of the cases so far. The overarching approach of YMCA is to accompany young people engaging with *plusone mentoring* as long as this is needed and to look for individual solutions once the young people are in a lower or no need of the mentoring service depending on their particular circumstances. In a small number of cases when the risk factor levels have decreased significantly the YMCA suggested reducing the frequency of contact with the young people (e.g. from once a week to once a month). This relates directly to *plusone mentoring's* philosophy of working towards building young people's self-reliance.

plusone mentoring has an enormous potential to build on its experience and knowledge of young people's situations in supporting them in their development through acting as a key stakeholder in partnerships with statutory agencies. Using the experience of *plusone mentoring* there is also scope to feed into broader strategies of community development particularly regarding vulnerable young people's needs.

5.2.4. Building translocal partnerships

A potential limitation of the existing partnerships is the fact they are restricted to one local area. This means that when a young person leaves the area, they drop away from the existing services and while particular agencies have their own interregional links, the multi-agency cooperation becomes interrupted. In a few cases where young people moved to another area Programme Managers have made considerable efforts to find further contacts and opportunities for the young people, but there is very little evidence regarding the impact of such a transition. If *plusone mentoring* was to be rolled out nationally, it would be useful to develop a strategy for coordination of services should young people move between areas.

5.3. Summary points

plusone mentoring shows evidence of working as a successful mediator between statutory services and community-based partnerships of young people and their families. Most partnerships within the scheme are already acting very effectively, while some others might benefit from further development. The key findings about the existing institutional partnerships within *plusone mentoring* are:

- The key multi-agency partnerships are organized at the local level and they reflect the needs and capacities of particular institutional partners as well as of the YMCA. Individual partnerships have been developed where appropriate, especially with Police and Education, but also with Social Work, Health and other statutory agencies partners.

- *plusone mentoring* is seen by other institutional partners as providing complementary services and filling a gap by targeting a distinctive group of young people, specific areas of concern, and by mediating the contact between young people and other agencies.

- *plusone mentoring* aims to work through individual strategies for each particular young person that would help them to engage with other services and to improve the prospects of their future development.

- The programme makes effort in finding appropriate alternatives for young people who move to another area. However, this is not always possible due to the small scale of the pilot project and there is very little evidence regarding the impact of such a move.

5.4. Recommendations and areas for the future development

- *plusone mentoring* has very few opportunities to achieve changes in broader social and environmental factors that underpin the difficult situations of many young people involved in the project[18]. However, we suggest building on the expertise that the programme has developed in the needs and potential of young people and to use this knowledge for informing broader policies on childhood, youth, public services and local development. *plusone mentoring* has a potential to become a key stakeholder in informing such policies.

- Partnership agencies acknowledge the long-term approach that mentoring requires. We recommend adopting a strong strategy of communicating the achievements of *plusone mentoring* in work with young people to them regularly and systematically. This might have the benefit of encouraging greater buy-in from some agencies which have been less centrally involved to date.

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[18] This is an aspect of the mentoring approach that has been raised elsewhere (Piper and Piper 2000). Individual work with young people through the mentoring approach should not be seen as self-sufficient for the development of young people's well-being, but rather as complementary to other approaches that address the areas of social and environmental circumstances of young people's lives at the local as well as national level (Hall 2003).

- YMCA has achieved moderate success in providing additional services to young people who take part in *plusone mentoring*. Where possible, this should be continued. However, because of the local YMCA centres' capacities and because of the location of young people, this is not possible in all cases and looking for alternative opportunities and sources in local communities should be continued.

- We recommend developing a national network of flexible and inclusive services that could accommodate this client group of young people effectively after they move to a new area. The experience of the agencies working with the young people in the previous area should be transferred as comprehensively and efficiently as possible to new multi-agency groups and *plusone mentoring* should play a pivotal role in this.

6. DISCUSSION

Our conclusion from the evaluation of *plusone mentoring* is that it brings positive impact to the lives of younger children at a high level of risk of offending. This adds to the evidence base of the impact of mentoring and extends Shiner *et al's.* (2004) argument that mentoring can 'bring substantial changes in the lives of even the most highly disaffected young people' (p.71) by focusing on the 8-14 age group. In order to achieve this, *plusone mentoring* has effectively adopted a youth work approach using volunteer mentors, and demonstrates a high level of compliance with what is considered good practice in mentoring (Parra *et al.* 2002, Hall 2003, Roberts *et al.* 2004). It demonstrates:

- Long-term, frequent and regular engagement

- Central attention given to how mentors and mentees are matched

- Young people's voluntary involvement and the child-centred focus of the activities

- Detailed monitoring and supervision of the mentors

- Successful targeting of young people fitting the scope of the programme so mentoring does not aim to replace other services when these are more appropriate.

plusone mentoring also has the potential to maintain such attributes in the future through the professional qualities of the staff, the commitment of its volunteer mentors, and through its theoretical and practical integrity which is 'a key influence on the development of successful interventions' (Shiner *et al.* 2004, p.29; see also Hollin 1995).

The programme is significant in its focus on work with younger children than majority of the community-based mentoring projects in the UK and in its prevention scope. While several other mentoring projects address young people

in similar situations where they lack positive social relationships and self-esteem, poor and/or school attendance, or show early signs of anti-social behaviour, *plusone mentoring* specifically targets 'high tariff' cases where several of the factors combine, with their risk level for the young people being high or very high, and where the risk of future offending is considerable. At the same time, *plusone mentoring* targets young people at an age when evidence from practice elsewhere (Farrington 1996; Whyte 2004) shows that a diversion from future persistent offending is possible by addressing the several areas where mentoring can have a positive effect, including social skills, self-esteem and independence, emotional resilience, engagement with institutions, school attendance and performance, or arrangements in family and community. This complex approach that draws on the principles of youth work enables the programme to build the resilience of the young people by both building on their strengths and reducing their existing risk factors.

plusone mentoring has proved successful in tackling the majority of key areas of wider need that are risk factors for future offending among the young people involved. Studies of other mentoring programmes, especially with older young people (see for example DuBois *et al.* 2002) suggest that mentoring can have a higher impact on behavioural areas (including academic performance or employability) than on emotional adjustment or social competence for which other forms of interventions are presumed to be more appropriate for older young people, such as individual therapies. In contrast, *plusone mentoring* as a project addressing a younger age group (8-14) shows a high level of impact in improving behaviour and also in developing emotional and social resilience. It has proved to have positive effects also on areas such as education or family relationships. The factor of working with this younger age group is significant as their patterns of behaviour may not be as sedimented as those of older teenagers.

The prevention scope of *plusone mentoring* and its focus on higher-tariff cases is significant and distinctive among other mentoring programmes in the UK. It also involves *plusone mentoring* in close partnerships with a range of institutional agencies engaging in the child protection and youth justice agenda in Scotland. From the perspective of the partner organisations, *plusone mentoring* is a valued and distinctive mechanism in the complex child protection/youth justice scheme and its role is complementary to those of the existing agencies. The partnerships enable the programme to draw from the supportive mechanisms provided by other agencies and develop effective mechanisms in delivering services to children and families (Tunstil and Aldgate 2000).

plusone mentoring has recorded a considerable success in drawing in a wide range of volunteers from the local communities to engage with vulnerable young people. It helps to deepen their understanding of the complex situations in which many young people find themselves and to shape their attitude in a non-judgemental way. The links between YMCA centres and their local communities offer potential to increase such attitudes still further.

There are some limits in the impact that *plusone mentoring* can provide for the young people, particularly relating to their broader social and environmental circumstances which the mentoring process cannot be expected to affect directly. However, there is strong potential in future to draw on the experience of young people's lives, needs and potential, as they are explored through *plusone mentoring.* Thus, *plusone mentoring* can be a key stakeholder in informing wider policies on children, youth, public services, and local development.

plusone mentoring successfully offers a model for delivery of elements of key national policies. It complies with the child-centred approach of *Getting It Right For Every Child* (Scottish Government 2008a), with the multi-agency approach to prevention found in *Early And Effective Intervention* (Scottish Government 2009), and with policies that emphasise the building of community capacities as an

alternative to public services such as in *Changing Lives* (Scottish Government 2006). At the same time, it shows that non-statutory agencies that draw from, and contribute to, the building of community capacities can be relevant and effective actors in the youth justice system and that a youth work approach to work with young people at the risk of future offending can be a highly effective one.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Below are direct responses to the key questions of the evaluation:

- *Are we able to see some evidence of changing attitudes and behaviours that might point us firmly towards successful diversion from crime?*

Yes, *plusone mentoring* has been highly successful in tackling the majority of areas of wider need that are considered as risk factors for future offending among young people. The programme is effective in targeting the intended client group of young people – that is young people in the 8-14 age group who are at high risk of future offending, a significant number of whom (51%) had a police record at the time of their referral, and who were not deemed to require more specialised services that volunteering mentors would be unable to provide. The long-term duration of the mentoring relationship is essential for achieving positive changes, but we can see the process of diversion of crime starting relatively early, after the relationship between the young person and their mentor is established. After 6 months or more of mentoring, a substantial improvement was found in a range of risk factors, particularly in young people's behaviour (in 86% of cases), attitude to offending (86%), relationships in their neighbourhood (64%) and in the development of their skills, talents or positive relationships (64%). Living arrangements, education, family relationships and young people's self-esteem were areas where improvements were less dramatic. Improvements in these areas took place over a longer period and are dependent more on factors external to the mentoring process.

The *SROI Report* calculates that the social return for each £1 of investment in *plusone mentoring* ranges between £6 and £13 with the most likely return being just under £10. Within that analysis, duration of the effects of mentoring in changing young people's behaviour over a number of years after the mentoring programme emerges as a critical variable, accounting for around half of the calculated social return. At this stage of the project (where young people have

been in the programme for a maximum of one year), it is as yet difficult to be certain of the long-term and post-mentoring duration of such changes. Future monitoring of the long-term impact of mentoring should be undertaken.

- *Are we able to identify value in building local community engagement with and improving attitudes towards vulnerable young people?*

Yes, *plusone mentoring* draws primarily from the local community sources by involving a total of 80 adult mentors from relatively diverse backgrounds and with various levels of experience in 2796 hours of voluntary work with vulnerable young people. It shows success in building a positive attitude and increasing understanding of the young people's complex situations, in developing a non-judgemental approach of the adults towards vulnerable young people, and in developing their skills in engagement with young people. Moreover, involvement in *plusone mentoring* can positively affect volunteers' career prospects. The established reputation and relationships of YMCA in the three local communities are significant factors in recruiting volunteers and in successfully engaging the families of the young people.

- *Are we able to judge the success of and future challenges in the new partnership approaches used by plusone mentoring (i.e. the referral groups and ongoing partner communication, feedback into the 'system' about interventions and subsequent response, strengths and weaknesses of this 'best practice' approach)?*

plusone mentoring is well integrated into local multi-agency partnerships, particularly through the system of referral groups and the communication with key partners, including Police, Social Work (Social Work Criminal Justice and/or Social Work Children and Families teams), NHS, Education departments and schools, Community Wardens, as well as other agencies. Partnerships with Police and Education were particularly effective. Communication of the programme's achievements to the partners at the local and national level is an area where

improvements can be made. The holistic approach of the multi-agency collaboration is a key strength of *plusone mentoring,* as is the central role of YMCA in delivering the programme. These aspects demonstrate best practice which could serve as a model for future expansion of this approach nationwide.

- *Can plusone mentoring provide an effective alternative to statutory provision for these young people? Can the programme provide an alternative that saves money against expected destinations builds value in terms of local community, achieving potential and contributing to society and in the process saving statutory colleagues time and effort to focus on other priorities?*

According to the *SROI Report*, the programme 'offers a significant return to its stakeholders' and 58% of the overall value goes to statutory agencies. We conclude that *plusone mentoring* successfully provides an alternative service that is effective in diverting young people from crime and thus saves time and effort of statutory agencies. However, it should not be seen as a replacement of these services. Rather, we identify *plusone mentoring* as having a complementary function to the statutory services that is highly effective and efficient in reducing risks of youth offending. It can be seen as an emerging 'best practice' model with potential to inform wider areas of policy and practice with vulnerable young people.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall programme development

- *plusone mentoring* should be continued and long-term financial security provided in order to maximise the impact of the approach.

- Stakeholders from partner institutions expressed their positive opinion about potential expansion of the scheme in their local areas so that more young people could benefit from mentoring. This would mean hiring additional staff as the current scope of the programme fully utilizes the capacities of Programme Managers.

- The project has the potential to be applied successfully in other localities. We recommend the Oversight Group of *plusone mentoring* undertakes a mapping of the demand and provisions for young people at risk of future offending across Scotland in order to identify which localities would benefit most from the approach and where the institutional circumstances might accommodate the project most effectively in future.

- We recommend that future evaluations are commissioned as the programme moves forward. This is important especially in relation to providing a stronger evidence base for the sustainability and long-term impact of the programme.

Organisational issues

- In those cases where the project covers a wider geographical area, splitting it into separate centres might significantly save the Programme Managers' time.

- We recommend employing more mechanisms that would prevent any negative impact if Programme Managers were suddenly to leave the

project. These might include developing interpersonal relationships between the volunteers and those YMCA workers who would cover some of the responsibilities of the Programme Managers if these need to drop out from the programme.

- We also suggest exploring what duties could be taken away from the Programme Managers' responsibilities (e.g. clerical) in order to free up more capacity to work with more young people.

<u>Diversion from crime and other behaviours</u>

- The programme has been very successful in identifying the right young people who might benefit from mentoring and in diverting them from crime by addressing the key risk factors for future offending. It also fits very well with what is perceived as standards of good praxis in youth mentoring. It has proved to be successfully responding to the national policies of early intervention and integrated child-centred approach to youth justice and child protection. In this regard, we recommend the continuation of its practice and its potential to be used in other areas of Scotland and suggest the following:

- The youth work approach and the flexible and inclusive nature of the programme are essential for making *plusone mentoring* accessible for many young people who are at risk of future offending. Young people, especially those from environmentally deprived communities for whom *plusone mentoring* has a significant role as a diversionary activity, may benefit from additional leisure time opportunities. We recommend that the mentoring process continues to facilitate young people's contact with appropriate provision. The current and future cuts in provision of youth services (see Bunt *et al.* 2010) increase the risk levels for young people and should be mitigated against.

- Experiences from the project show that the holistic and responsive philosophy of *plusone mentoring* entails the potential to identify further areas of intervention. It is a question for further discussion whether *plusone mentoring* can be expanded so the activities of mentors would address directly also families or young people's involvement in communities beyond the individual mediations. This would require increasing resources, skills and human capital of mentors, but also Programme Managers in YMCA.

- Going forward, we recommend monitoring the long-term impact of mentoring on young people after they have completed the programme. This will provide evidence regarding sustainability of the impact of *plusone mentoring* for the young people.

- We find the existing scoring system of the risk levels useful. We recommend assessing young people's risk levels on a regular basis. For long-term monitoring purposes, we recommend each young person is scored at the end of each of the identified key phases (2 months, 6 months and 12 months).

- We highlight the usefulness of the qualitative assessment on young people's progress collated by the Programme Managers and its use in deciding on a course of action. We recommend this continues.

Community engagement

- We recommend that *plusone mentoring* continues the good practice of recruiting and training volunteer mentors from local communities.

- We recommend that YMCA remains the key provider of *plusone mentoring* because of its established relationships in local communities and its ability to attract a diverse range of volunteers.

- We recommend that volunteers continue to commit to a minimum period of 12 months.

- We recommend that Programme Managers develop a strategy that can be put in place when mentors suddenly leave the project. This would mitigate against any potential negative effects for young people.

- In relation to possible future developments of *plusone mentoring,* interest was expressed by some mentors in expanding their role to more directly address issues in young people's families or communities. As this raises concerns about the safety of the mentors as well as of the young people and their families, and as there are no adequate records of mentoring developing into such as a complex type of support in the literature, we recommend addressing such situations individually. Careful monitoring, advanced training and close engagement with other stakeholders would be needed.

- Initial training for mentors is clearly providing a sound foundation and should be continued. However, many mentors cite the time demands of *plusone mentoring* as being at the limit of their current capacities. Thus any additional training required for the expansion of the mentoring role to include areas mentioned above would need to be carefully negotiated, and appropriate to the time available to volunteer mentors and Programme Managers. This might involve a wider range of YMCA staff in supervision or training, or employing online/distance learning methods.

Institutional partnerships

- *plusone mentoring* has very few opportunities to achieve changes in broader social and environmental factors that underpin the difficult

situations of many young people involved in the project[19]. However, we suggest building on the expertise that the programme has developed in the needs and potential of young people and to use this knowledge for informing broader policies on childhood, youth, public services and local development. *plusone mentoring* has a potential to become a key stakeholder in informing such policies.

- Partnership agencies acknowledge the long-term approach that mentoring requires. We recommend adopting a strong strategy of communicating the achievements of *plusone mentoring* in work with young people to them regularly and systematically. This might have the benefit of encouraging greater buy-in from some agencies which have been less centrally involved to date.

- YMCA has achieved moderate success in providing additional services to young people who take part in *plusone mentoring*. Where possible, this should be continued. However, because of the local YMCA centres' capacities and because of the location of young people, this is not possible in all cases and looking for alternative opportunities and sources in local communities should be continued.

- We recommend developing a national network of flexible and inclusive services that could accommodate this client group of young people effectively after they move to a new area. The experience of the agencies working with the young people in the previous area should be transferred

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[19] This is an aspect of the mentoring approach that has been raised elsewhere (Piper and Piper 2000). Individual work with young people through the mentoring approach should not be seen as self-sufficient for the development of young people's well-being, but rather as complementary to other approaches that address the areas of social and environmental circumstances of young people's lives at the local as well as national level (Hall 2003).

as comprehensively and efficiently as possible to new multi-agency groups and *plusone mentoring* should play a pivotal role in this.

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