Mentor Training Programme Evaluation

Final report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With funding from the Department for Education (DfE), the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) commissioned the design and delivery of three mentor training programmes for mentors with varying levels of previous experience: (A) an online introduction for new mentors, (B) a programme for new mentors and (C) an advanced level programme for experienced mentors. The mentor training programmes formed part of a wider portfolio of work to improve the quality of mentoring for practitioners in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector, with the long-term aim of improving the development, progression and retention of new teachers entering the sector. This report presents findings from the evaluation of Programmes B and C, undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies.

The ETF advocate an approach to mentoring and coaching of teachers in the FET sector which is: developmental and nurturing in nature; rooted in collaboration and support; and adaptable to the individual needs of the mentee/coachee. Programmes B and C were aligned to these principles and consisted of 40 guided learning hours that were delivered between October 2020 and March 2021. It was originally intended that the courses would offer blended learning but they were delivered fully online due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The programmes included experience of a range of mentoring techniques; facilitated action learning sets and simulation exercises. Programme C aimed to go beyond an introduction to deeper knowledge and expertise and required participants to undertake a development project to improve mentoring in their organisation. Mentors on both programmes were expected to undertake 40-50 hours of mentoring over the six-month period. The ETF allocated a grant of £6,000 to each participant, payable to their employer to contribute to the costs of taking part. Within each FE provider, a grant lead was identified who monitored activity and expenditure and provided updates to the ETF. A maximum of five grants were available per FE provider. In total, 245 grants were awarded across a range of provider types and across all nine geographic regions: 220 participants continued to the end of the programme and 40 participants withdrew but were replaced by 15 mentors/coaches who were on a waiting list for the programme.

Overview of the evaluation

The ETF commissioned this evaluation in November 2020. The aims of the research were to:

− Gather practitioners' experience of taking part in the mentor training programmes
− Understand changes to confidence, understanding, knowledge and skills
− Understand whether learning was applied and led to changes in mentoring practices
− Assess enablers and barriers to the success of the programme
− Understand what worked well and areas for improvement to inform future programmes

To answer these questions, the research team developed an evaluation framework based on the Kirkpatrick (new World) model[1]. There were two main data collection methods: interviews and surveys. Interviews were conducted by phone or video conferencing with 33 mentors (14 new mentors on Programme B, 19 experienced mentors on Programme C), 26 grant leads and 27 mentees. Mentors that had withdrawn from the programme were also contacted[2]. Two people who withdrew from the training took part in an interview and a further 5 submitted written responses about their reasons for withdrawing. Across the sample, there was a mix of organisation types, mentor job roles, regions and mentors from different learning clusters, who each had a different lead

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[1] https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-New-World-Kirkpatrick-Model
[2] Excluding those that had left their organisation or who were on sickness absence

trainer. In addition, expert interviews were conducted with six members of staff who were delivering and managing the programme. The trainers represented both programmes and volunteered to take part following an email invitation sent to all trainers. All qualitative interviews took place in January-February 2021. The online survey was sent to 240 mentors[3], with 135 responses giving a response rate of 56%. Half (50%) of respondents were on Programme B and half (50%) on Programme C. The survey was launched on 25th January and was open for three weeks.

Key findings
Programme Participants and their reasons for taking part
- Mentors on both programmes were highly qualified. The majority of survey respondents (85%) held a qualification at Level 5 or above, and nearly half (47%) had a Level 7 qualification.
- Mentors were also experienced education professionals, from a wide range of subject specialisms. The majority of survey respondents (89%) had more than six years of teaching experience and half of respondents (51%) on Programme C had over 16 years of experience.
- The majority of survey respondents had no previous mentoring training (85% on Programme B and 53% on Programme C) suggesting the programme offered significant potential to add value and meet sector training needs.
- Participants were motivated to take part for their own professional development and because there were perceived benefits for their organisations relating to: improved teaching and learning; improved retention; and improved support for beginning teachers, particularly those new to FE from industry.
- Some participants were particularly drawn to the programmes because they situated mentoring models in the specific context of the FET sector.
- The training programmes were perceived to be well-aligned to strategic organisational objectives.
- Some providers reported they would not have been able to offer training to their staff without the grant and that this was important in their decision to apply; for others, the grant was a secondary reason for applying. There was consensus among mentors and grant leads that the grant was useful for facilitating more effective participation than might otherwise have been possible.

Development and delivery of the programme
- There was a sound process in place for the development of the programmes, with a good level of quality assurance.
- A short time into the programme design and development phase, a strategic decision was made at ETF that all online CPD should use the FutureLearn platform to deliver online knowledge-based content. This caused delays to the programme launch and meant the delivery partner had to continue development work on the programmes while they were live.
- Providers heard about the training programme from a range of sources and found the application process straightforward. Suggested improvements were bringing the application process forward to earlier in the academic year to help with arranging timetables for those allocated places, and also provision of more detailed information. There were some instances of mentors not having the right level of prior knowledge for the programme they were on, which additional information and more screening would help overcome.
- There were high levels of satisfaction and engagement with the training (Kirkpatrick Level 1) and participants perceived it as relevant to their contexts.
- A few smaller private and voluntary and community sector providers did not perceive the programme to be as useful because there were fewer opportunities to work alongside similar organisations in their group training sessions and break-out groups.

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[3] These were the participants listed as currently on the course in participant data in December 2020

- Mentors, grant leads and delivery staff highlighted many strengths of the training. These included the delivery model, opportunities for peer networking, quality of input from tutors, resources, opportunities for role-play and to participate in Action Learning Sets and flexibility and support to help people catch up if they had to miss a session.
- A key enabling factor was high levels of support for mentors from within their organisations, as well as the online mode, which increased accessibility.
- The main challenges experienced related to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on providers, which affected their ability to participate effectively in the programme and for some, caused withdrawals from the programme, which may not otherwise have occurred.
- Early problems with the move to online only via the FutureLearn platform caused some confusion to learners, delays to starts, and subsequent timetable clashes. These were resolved over time.
- There were mixed views on whether information about the time commitment for the programme was clear enough at the start and, related to this, some participants reported difficulties fitting the training into their busy schedules.
- There were mixed views on the balance of time spent on different learning activities but the delivery partner responded to feedback and this was resolved.
- Some grant leads considered there could have been more information on expectations for the grant lead role.

Perceived learning impacts
- Over 85% of new and experienced mentors in the survey agreed that they had improved in their confidence, knowledge and understanding because of taking part in the programme. This was in relation to a wide range of areas of relevance to mentoring.
- Participants had an increased understanding of the role of a mentor, key mentoring principles and different coaching and mentoring frameworks as a result of taking part in the programme.
- Mentors reported increased confidence as a result of having knowledge of more tools and techniques. The evidence-informed nature of the programme also helped to build confidence.
- Skills that were improved were listening skills, questioning techniques, how to structure mentoring sessions, reflection, and information and approaches that would help them also with their professional practice and their line management roles.
- Grant leads, while not always aware of the detail of what had been learnt, also reported improvements in understanding, knowledge, and skills. Some gave specific examples of mentors discussing models and approaches to mentoring more confidently with them or demonstrating new ways of working.
- Many mentors on Programme C for advanced mentors considered the training was a useful refresher. Grant leads too recognised that the training was beneficial for experienced practitioners and could help to reinvigorate their mentoring practice.

Perceived impact on practice
- Over 8 in 10 mentors had achieved or made good progress towards using new ideas and approaches to mentoring as a result of the programme (84%). The majority pointed to using or making progress towards using a range of practices.
- Setting up their mentoring programme or enhancing an existing mentoring programme in their organisation was an important area of behavioural impact for mentors.
- Mentors described how they were moving their organisations' mentoring programmes towards a development model of mentoring.

- Changes to behaviour that supported a more developmental model of mentoring included improved listening and questioning skills, a more individualised and mentee-led approach, improved support for resilience and wellbeing and improved self-reflective practices.
- New mentors described how the training had given their mentoring sessions more structure: the way that sessions started and finished, goal exploration and goal setting, and setting out the boundaries of mentoring as different to line management or Quality Improvement.
- Experienced mentors were making 'some' or 'good' progress on the additional aims of their training programme: managing the mentoring programme, implementing action learning sets, peer supervision, and evaluation of their programme.
- While grant leads were not able to comment in detail on changes to mentors' practice, they observed that generally mentors were fully committed to the mentor role and appeared to be drawing on learning from the programme in their mentoring. They observed greater structure to mentoring and a good frequency of contact.

Perceived impacts on organisations, staff and students
- Mentees were very positive about their experiences of being mentored and in the main described a supportive, developmental, mentee-led approach.
- Mentees agreed with mentors and grant leads that taking part in mentoring was delivering benefits for them. These included: improved confidence, resilience, wellbeing, and work-life balance, improved teaching practices and an increased sense of autonomy and self-efficacy.
- The impact on staff wellbeing was particularly important and welcomed this year during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the focus on specific skills such as remote delivery supported staff in new ways of working.
- Mentors and mentees perceived that the mentor training programme was starting to have an impact on students through the increased skills and confidence of the teachers being mentored.
- There were early indications of the potential of the training to support organisational improvement, particularly in relation to improved staff retention. Mentors and grant leads were positive about potential future impacts and mentees' enthusiasm for mentoring. There were many examples of reduced stress, workload and long hours and increased confidence, which are likely to contribute to increased satisfaction in roles and in the longer-term could improve staff retention.
- Although it is too early in the programme to see wider sectoral impacts of the programme, organisations that were part of college groups and other networks were sharing their positive experiences and raising the profile of developmental mentoring models.

Conclusions and recommendations
The mentor training programmes have been designed and developed effectively and are providing high quality training. The programmes aim to improve the standard of mentoring within the FE sector. This evaluation was conducted mid-way through the training programmes but nonetheless indicates that this aim is being achieved. There is evidence that the training has had positive outcomes related to improvements in mentors' learning and mentoring practice and mentees experiencing benefits from this. There are also early signs of wider organisational impacts emerging.

Recommendations for the ETF
- Continue to support mentor training for the FE sector.
- Continue to offer differentiated training based on experience and ensure that recruitment allows for accurate filtering of mentors onto the most appropriate programme for their skill and experience level.

- Consider longitudinal research and evaluation to capture the longer-term impacts from the training (relating to Kirkpatrick Level 4).
- Continue to pay a grant to enable access to the programme.

Recommendations for colleges and training providers
- Continue to support staff to attend the mentor training programme.
- Continue to support mentors and coordinators to identify mentees to receive mentorship.
- Ensure that staff that attend the training are well-supported.

Recommendations for the delivery partner
- The recruitment process should be adjusted to ensure better checking of the suitability of candidates for the particular programme they were applying for.
- Plan and communicate in advance the timetables for the training programme modules.
- Improve the communication about the flipped learning model, self-guided learning hours and reading requirements.
- Consider how the online platform can be maximised in its use for storage, interaction, and delivery.
- Continue to consider the most effective clustering of providers, with particular attention to ensure that smaller private and voluntary and community sector providers can network with similar organisations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mentoring in FE

The positive impacts of participation in mentoring for mentors, mentees and for their institutions is generally well-established[4]. Research commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) as part of the development of this programme found that positive impacts for mentors include:

− Enhanced knowledge and understanding.
− Increased confidence and self-efficacy.
− Enhanced skills.

The positive impacts for mentees include:

− Enhanced knowledge and understanding.
− Enhanced skills.
− Enhanced effectiveness, competence, or productivity.
− Enhanced retention and career progression.
− Enhanced resilience, wellbeing and work-life balance.

The positive impact for organisations includes the development or enhancement of professional learning cultures or communities and enhanced staff retention. The same research also highlights the positive impact of mentoring training, education, and development in enhancing the effectiveness of mentoring.[5]

There have been few studies of mentoring and coaching specifically in the Further Education and Training (FE) sector, although there is evidence that, where working well, mentoring and coaching could bring a range of benefits for teachers. These include emotional wellbeing, support with general and subject-specific pedagogy, and retention in the profession.[6]

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[4] e.g. Murray, M. (2001), Energizing employees with mentoring: They keep staying, and staying, and staying…. Perf. Improv., 40, 34–38; Mullen, C. A. (2012). Mentoring: An Overview. In Fletcher, S. & Mullen, C. A. (Eds.), SAGE Handbook of Mentoring and Coaching in Education. (pp. 7–23). SAGE; Káplár-Kodácsy, K. & Dorner, H. (2020). Rebuilding Faculty Capacities in Higher Education: An Alternative for Relational Mentoring. Innovations in Education and Teaching International. Taylor & Francis, UK. DOI: 10.1080/14703297.2020.1850318

[5] Hobson, A. J., Maxwell, B., Káplár-Kodácsy, K., Hotham, E. (2020) The Nature and Impact of Effective Mentoring Training, Education and Development (MTED), Education & Training Foundation. Available at: www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ETF_MTED_Final_Report_Hobson-et-al_2020_Final_AH_30_Nov.pdf [Accessed 13 April 2021]

[6] Hobson, A. J., Maxwell, B., Stevens, A., Doyle, K., & Malderez, A. (2015). Mentoring and coaching for teachers in the further education and skills sector in England: Full report. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

The research by Hobson and colleagues (2015), also showed that the benefits of mentoring in the FE sector have not been fully realised. Mentoring in the FE sector has been characterised by a lack of training, limited time, and the use of mentoring as a remedial strategy to address perceived under-performance.

Based on the available evidence, the ETF support an approach to mentoring which is:

− developmental and nurturing in nature.
− rooted in collaboration and support.
− adaptable to the individual needs of the mentee.

This developmental approach is as depicted in Hobson's (2016) ONSIDE model of developmental mentoring. This includes an approach to mentoring that empowers mentees, is compassionate, builds on mentor and mentee capacity for self reflection and growth, and provides support or scaffolding for those learning a role from others that are more experienced. It also acknowledges that the mentoring relationship is two-way and that the mentors can learn from their mentees also.

Developmental (ONSIDE) mentoring should be*:*
− "**O**ff-line (i.e. separated from line-management) and non-hierarchical.
− **N**on-judgemental and non-evaluative.
− **S**upportive of mentees' psycho-social needs and wellbeing.
− **I**ndividualised – tailored to the specific and changing needs (emotional and developmental) of the mentee.
− **D**evelopmental and growth-oriented – seeking to promote mentees' learnacy [how they learn to learn] and provide them with appropriate degrees of challenge.
− **E**mpowering – progressively non-directive to support mentees to become more autonomous and agentic".[7]

1.2 Introduction to the programme

The Department for Education (DfE) funded the ETF to run a programme focused on developing high quality mentoring training that supports teachers from early careers onwards to grow and progress within the sector. The aim of promoting a programme of mentoring in the FE sector was to improve the quality of the mentoring available to practitioners, to increase the effectiveness of support offered to mentees, and to improve the retention of new teachers. Additionally, the ETF intended that as a result of the evidence-informed training, the increased prevalence of mentoring in the sector could promote a shared understanding of what constitutes effective mentoring practices, raise awareness of what mentoring looks like, and promote best practice for mentoring.

This programme consisted of three main strands of activity:

1 The creation of a mentoring framework and accompanying guides for mentees, mentors, and leaders in the FE sector.

2 A small-scale, desk-based review of effective mentoring training.

3 Professional development programmes for mentors.

The professional development programmes for mentors were intended to promote evidence-informed and developmental approaches to mentoring. They aimed to apply characteristics of effective mentoring training and offer an opportunity to pilot the new mentoring framework and

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[7] Hobson, A.J. (2016), 'Judgementoring and how to avert it: Introducing ONSIDE Mentoring for beginning teachers' International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 87-110.

guides. The programme was expected to make a difference to the everyday mentoring practice of participants, increase their confidence and knowledge, and have an impact on mentees' professional development as teachers and their organisations.

The ETF commissioned the design and delivery of three mentor training programmes for mentors with varying levels of previous experience: (A) an online introduction for new mentors, (B) a programme for new mentors and (C) an advanced level programme for experienced mentors that had 1-2 years' experience of mentoring. By splitting the programmes by the experience levels of the participants, the programme materials could be adapted according to existing awareness of mentoring principles. It was originally intended that the programmes would offer blended learning but due to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the programmes were delivered fully online. Programme A was delivered in December 2020, Programmes B and C were delivered between October 2020 and March 2021.

All three programmes aimed to improve the quality of mentoring for practitioners in the FE sector to increase the effectiveness of the support offered to mentees. Programme A (outside of the scope of this evaluation) was a short programme of 6 hours. Programmes B and C consisted of 40 guided learning hours that were delivered over six months, between October 2020 and March 2021. Both Programme B and C divided their larger cohorts into learning clusters of around 25 participants, each with a lead trainer.

Programme B for new mentors provided: experience of a range of mentoring techniques; facilitated action learning sets; simulation exercises to try out and reflect on a range of mentoring techniques in a safe space; and opportunity for mentoring practice. Programme C for experienced mentors also had a focus on a range of mentoring techniques but aimed to go beyond an introduction to deeper knowledge and expertise. It also offered the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on a range of mentoring techniques, facilitated action learning sets and opportunity for mentoring practice. Additionally, it offered the chance to critically reflect on work contexts and to undertake a small development project to improve mentoring in participants' organisation.

Each mentor taking part in Programmes B and C was allocated a grant of £6,000 payable to their employer, which contributed towards the costs of reducing the mentors' teaching timetable so they could undertake the programme and 40-50 hours of mentoring practice. The grant could also cover costs of additional responsibilities where reductions in timetable were not possible, the costs of reducing mentees' timetables to participate in the mentoring sessions, and administrative costs associated with coordinating mentoring activities (matching mentors and mentees, monitoring the mentoring programme, and completing the ETF monthly reports). Within each participating FE provider, a grant lead was identified who was responsible for monitoring and logging these mentoring hours and reporting back to the ETF. A maximum of five grants were available per FE provider.

1.3 Programme participants

A total of 245 participants were awarded grants across Programme B and C. Of these 220 (90%) participants continued to the end of the programme. 40 participants withdrew but were replaced by 15 mentors/coaches who were on a waiting list for the programme. There were 113 mentors on Programme B and 107 on Programme C who continued to the end of the programme. Reflecting the composition of the FE workforce[8], the majority of participants were female (73%)[9]. Personal data

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[8] See SIR Data Insights, *Further Education Workforce Data for England. Analysis of the 2018-2019 Staff Individualised Record (SIR) data*: https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SIR27-REPORT-FOR-PUBLICATION.pdf

[9] This was based on data from mid-way through the programmes in December 2020.

about ethnicity and age group was not analysed due to data protection regulations (GDPR)

Provider type

The programmes attracted participants from a range of provider types. The majority were employed by General FE colleges and private training providers, but there were also representatives from specialist FE colleges, adult and community learning providers, charity and voluntary sector organisations, and sixth form colleges.

Graph 1 Provider type of participants
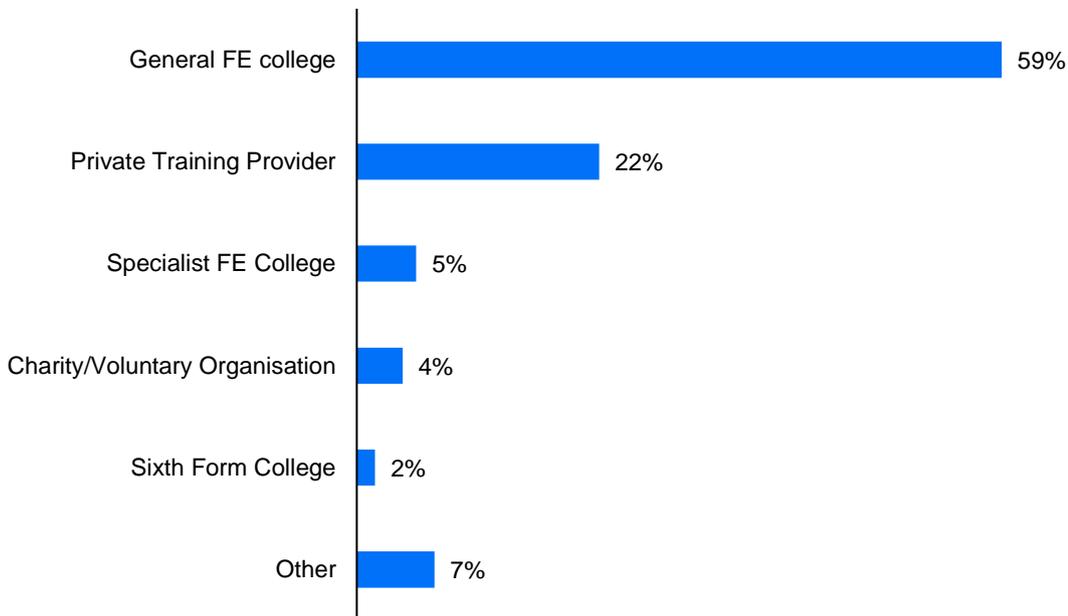
Source: Programme Management Information, base=238

Geographic region

Similarly, the programme was successful in attracting participants from all nine geographic regions in England.

Graph 2 Geographic region of participants
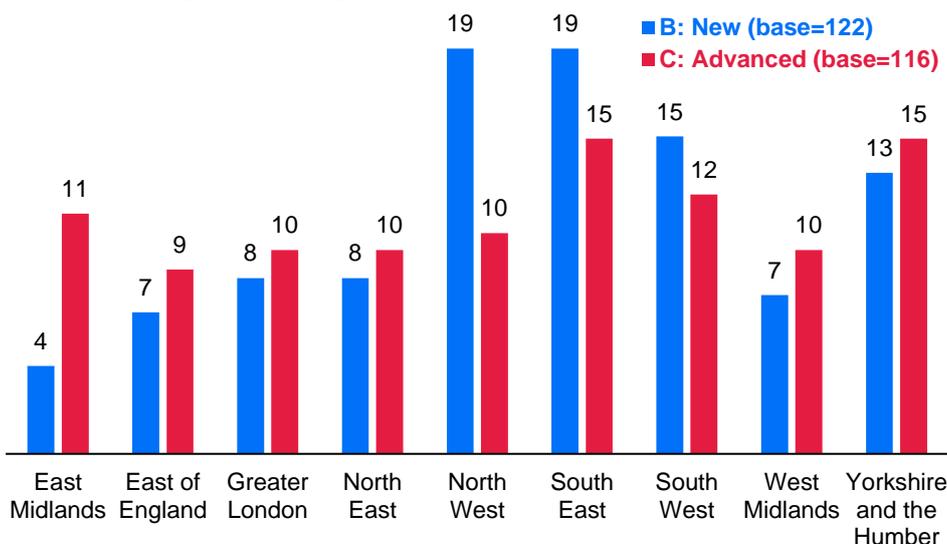
1.4 Approach to the evaluation

The ETF commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) in November 2020 to undertake an evaluation of the mentor training programme – Programmes B: Mentoring skills for new mentors and C: Advanced skills for experienced mentors.

Research questions

The aims of the research were to:

− Gather practitioners' experience of taking part in the professional development programmes for mentors.
− Understand whether providers incorporated the gained knowledge into their everyday mentoring practice.
− Understand whether participation had any effect on the confidence and knowledge of those who participated.
− Understand (self-reported) impact on:
  − Mentees' professional development as teachers;
  − The FE provider, from leaders' perspectives;
  − Mentees that the participants engaged with.
− The limitations and barriers to success of the programme.
− The effectiveness of the different approaches being used in meeting the needs of practitioners in different regions, provider types and job roles.
− Understand what elements of the programme worked well or need improvement to support future development of the programme.

The evaluation framework

To help evaluate the perceived impact and thus systematically assess the mentor training programme, the research team developed a detailed evaluation framework based on the Kirkpatrick model of training impact. As set out in the Kirkpatrick (new World) model[10], the outcomes and impacts of the mentor training programme can be grouped into four levels:

− Level 1: Immediate reactions to the training programme.
− Level 2: Evidence that participants have gained knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence, and commitment to mentoring.
− Level 3: Evidence that participants have applied what they have learned through the training to their practice and role as a mentor.
− Level 4: Organisational results that occurred due to participation in the training.

The benefit of this framework is that it allows for the fact that the mentors were still going through the training at the time of the research. It also provides a robust approach to establishing self-reported impact in the absence of a counterfactual group. In this case, Levels 1 and 2 provide useful initial insights into immediate reflections on the training, Level 3 provides initial insights into whether any changes were made to their mentoring practice or mentor programme. Due to the timing of the research, the respondents were asked to report on early views of longer-term results, as Kirkpatrick notes that useful evaluation at Level 3 and above should occur three to six months post-training. Some Level 4 impacts occur over longer time periods and this is out of scope for most short- to medium-term evaluations. The approach to include colleagues (grant leads) and mentees in the

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[10] https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-New-World-Kirkpatrick-Model

evaluation means that this early evaluation can comment on some of these Level 4 organisational impacts.

1.5 Methodology

The evaluation was a mixed methods study with two main data collection methods: interviews and a survey. The semi-structured interviews were targeted to include mentors (including some who had withdrawn from the training), mentees and grant leads. These interviews took place between January and March 2021. In addition, there were expert interviews with six members of staff who were delivering and managing the programme conducted in January-February 2021. The interviews were accompanied by a census-style survey sent to all registered participants on the programme in January 2021. The evaluation findings have also been informed by analysis of the participant information (including information on organisation type for example) in December 2020. This secondary data analysis helped to set the sampling criteria and establish an understanding of the programme cohorts.

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews with mentors aimed to generate an understanding of what has contributed to knowledge and skills gains, or conversely hampered progress – providing both breadth and depth of understanding of the early self-reported impact of the mentor training programme.

Interviews were conducted by phone or video conferencing with 33 mentors (14 new mentors on Programme B, 19 experienced mentors on Programme C), 26 grant leads and 27 mentees. Mentors that had withdrawn from the programme were contacted[11] for interview or to submit a written response by email; 2 interviews were conducted with withdrawn participants and there were 5 written responses from participants that had withdrawn.

Mentors were recruited to the research in two ways. Firstly, a sample was selected from the programme participant data, aiming for a spread across organisation types, job role and region. Secondly, mentors who responded to the online survey were invited to also indicate their interest in taking part in a qualitative interview. For those who expressed an interest, selective sampling was then used to ensure a range of participant types using the criteria below.

MENTOR INTERVIEWS	PROGRAMME B – NEW TO MENTORING	PROGRAMME C – ADVANCED MENTORING	TOTAL
Organisation type			
General Further Education College	8	11	19
Sixth Form College	0	1	1
Specialist College	2	3	5
Private Training Provider	3	1	4
Other	1	3	4
Job role			
Senior Manager / Principal	2	1	3
Middle Manager	2	10	12
Teacher / Lecturer / Trainer / Tutor	9	8	17

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[11] Excluding those that had left their organisation or who were on sickness absence

Other incl. Assessor	1	0	1
Region			
East Midlands	0	1	1
East of England	2	1	3
Greater London	2	2	4
North East	1	3	4
North West	1	2	3
South East	1	1	2
South West	4	3	7
West Midlands	3	4	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	-	2	2

Source: IES, 2021

Overall, the achieved sample included good diversity on the primary sampling criteria of provider type, programme, job role and region. Across the sample, there was also a good mix of mentors: from different learning clusters, who each had different lead trainers; who were line managers of their mentees and those who were not; and mentors who shared the subject specialism of their mentees and those who did not.

Mentor Survey

To support the in-depth qualitative research, the research included an online survey for mentors to capture views from as many participants as possible. The survey was launched on 25th January 2020 and was open for three weeks.

The survey consisted of 23 questions for new mentors on programme B and 30 questions for experienced mentors on programme C, who had extra questions to explore the additional aims of the advanced skills programme. The survey used predominantly closed questions to support analysis and enable the survey to be completed quicker, plus open questions to elicit further detail. The survey was tested with 5 mentors ahead of launch, who volunteered via the delivery partner. The mentors completed a test version of the survey online whilst on a video-call with researchers. This testing helped to refine the wording of some questions and established the average length of time to complete the survey. The survey was sent to a total of 240 mentors[12], with 135 responses giving a response rate of 56%. Half (50%) of respondents were on Programme B and half (50%) on Programme C.

Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Programme Participants, examines the characteristics and background of participating mentors and their motivations for applying for the training programmes.

Chapter 2: Development and delivery of the programmes, assesses what worked well and challenges in relation to developing and delivering the programmes.

Chapter 3: Learning impacts, assesses whether intended improvements to confidence, understanding, knowledge and skills have been achieved.

Chapter 4: Impact on practice, analyses changes to mentoring practice and behaviours and

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[12] These were the participants listed as currently on the programme in participant data in December 2020

provides an overview of mentoring practice and processes in participating providers.

Chapter 5: Impact on organisations, staff, students, and sector examines the extent to which the training programmes have delivered wider benefits.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations summarises the key achievements of the training programme and makes recommendations for the ETF, delivery partner, providers, and mentors in relation to similar future programmes.

2. PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS

Summary
- Mentors on both programmes were highly qualified. The majority (85%) held a qualification at Level 5 or above, and nearly half (47%) had a Level 7.
- Mentors were also experienced education professionals, from a wide range of subject specialisms. The majority of participants (89%) had more than six years of teaching experience and half of those (51%) on Programme C had over 16 years of experience.
- The majority of participants had no previous mentoring training (85% on Programme B and 53% on Programme C) suggesting the programme offered significant potential to add value and meet sector training needs.
- Participants were motivated to take part for their own professional development and because there were perceived benefits for their organisations relating to: improved teaching and learning; improved retention; and improved support for beginning teachers, particularly those new to FE from industry.
- The training programmes were perceived to be well-aligned to strategic organisational objectives.
- Some providers reported they would not have been able to offer training to their staff without the grant and that this was important in their decision to apply; for others, the grant was a secondary reason for applying.
- There was consensus among mentors and grant leads that the grant was useful for facilitating more effective participation than might otherwise have been possible.

2.1 Mentor background and context

Participants on Programme C for advanced mentors tended to be in more senior positions within their organisations. According to the participant information provided by the delivery partner and taken from application forms:

- On the advanced Programme C, there were roughly equal proportions of middle/functional managers (42% of participants) and teachers, lecturers, trainers, and tutors (43%) whereas on Programme B the majority were teachers, lecturers, trainers, and tutors (63%).
- On both programmes, there were a small number of leaders and members of the senior management team (12 individuals in total).

Mentors recruited across the programme typically held **high levels of previous qualifications**, the majority (85%) held a qualification at Level 5 or above, and nearly half (47%) had a Level 7. There were no significant differences between the level of qualifications held and the programme level mentors entered.

Graph 3 Highest qualifications held by mentors

Qualification	Percentage
Level 7	47%
Level 6	15%
Level 5	20%
Level 4	12%
Level 3	1%
No formal qualifications	2%
Other	3%
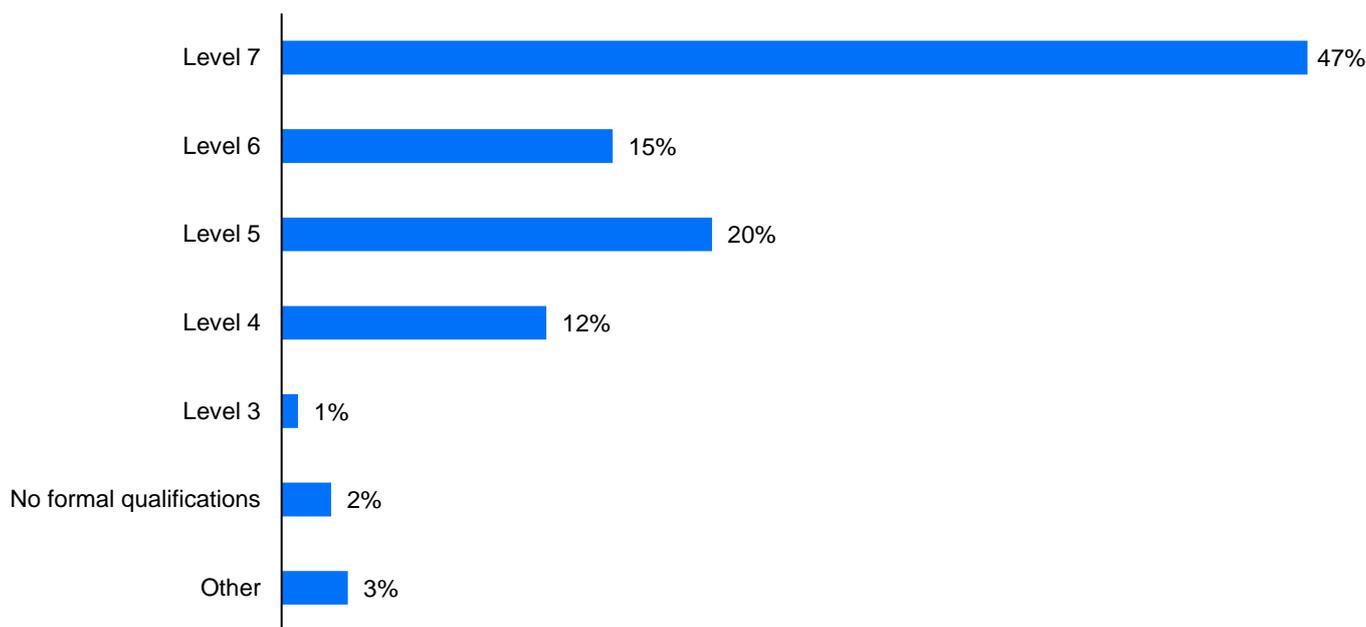
Source: Survey of mentors. Base=132

The **majority (83%) of mentors had a permanent full-time contract** with their employer, while only a small proportion (15%) held part-time contracts, were self-employed (2%), or had fixed term contracts (1%). There were no significant differences between employment type and the programme level mentors entered.

Graph 4 Mentor employment type

Mentor employment type

- **Permanent work (Full time)** — 83%
- **Permanent work (Part time)** — 15%
- **Fixed term contract (Longer than 6 months)** — 1%
- **Self employed** — 2%
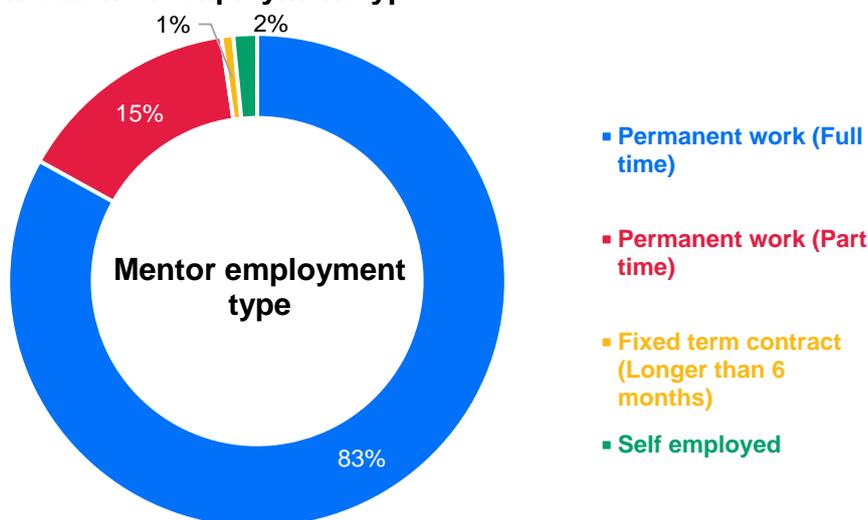
Source: Survey of mentors. Base=130

Mentors had a range of teaching experience, with the majority (89%) having taught for more than six years. Those on Programme C were more likely than those on Programme B to have more years teaching experience, with none of the respondents on Programme C having taught for less than six years and more than one-half (51%) having taught for over 16 years. Interestingly, a small

number of participants on Programme B had not completed a first year of teaching (5%). In some cases, this correlates with people in non-teaching roles, for a small number they are new teachers. This implies that mentors are providing mentorships based on attributes other than teaching experience.

Table 1 Number of years teaching - by programme type

NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING	PROGRAMME B – NEW TO MENTORING (BASE=64)	PROGRAMME C – ADVANCED MENTORING (BASE=67)
0 (Not completed first year of teaching)	5%	0%
1 (Undertaking second year of teaching)	3%	0%
2 to 5	16%	0%
6 to 10	25%	18%
11 to 15	19%	31%
16 to 20	16%	25%
21+	17%	25%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in chart.

Mentors came from a range of subject specialisms. Notably more than one-fifth (22%) of the mentors in Programme C were from Education and Training (including initial teaching training), while 15% were from English. In Programme B the subject with the highest number of mentors was mathematics (13%). These mentors with a mathematics specialism were often mentoring people that shared their subject specialism.

Other specialities given by a number of respondents included:

− Basic skills (English, maths, and digital).
− Skills for life.
− Physical Education and Sport Science.
− Hair and Beauty.
− Hospitality.

A small number also noted they were in non-teaching roles: these were internal quality assessor roles and a digital learning manager.

Table 2 Area of specialism - by programme type

AREA OF SPECIALISM	PROGRAMME B – NEW TO MENTORING (BASE=64)	PROGRAMME C – ADVANCED MENTORING (BASE=67)
Arts, media and publishing	3%	5%
Business, administration and law	9%	9%
Construction, planning and the built environment	5%	2%
Education and Training (including initial teacher education)	3%	22%
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2%	3%
English (including literacy)	6%	15%
Family learning	2%	0%
Health, public services and care	9%	8%
Information and communication technology (ICT)	0%	3%
Leisure, travel and tourism	5%	0%
Mathematics	13%	2%
Preparation for life and work	5%	3%
Retail and commercial enterprise	6%	0%
Science	0%	6%
Social Sciences	6%	2%
Other	27%	22%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in chart.

Nearly half (46%) of the mentors on Programme B had less than 1 years' experience of mentoring. In line with the eligibility requirements for the programmes, mentors on Programme C were more likely to have had more mentoring experience than those on Programme B. As Graph 5 shows, all mentors on Programme C had more than one year experience of mentoring, and over one-half (57%) had more than four years' experience.

Graph 5 Length of mentoring experience by - programme type
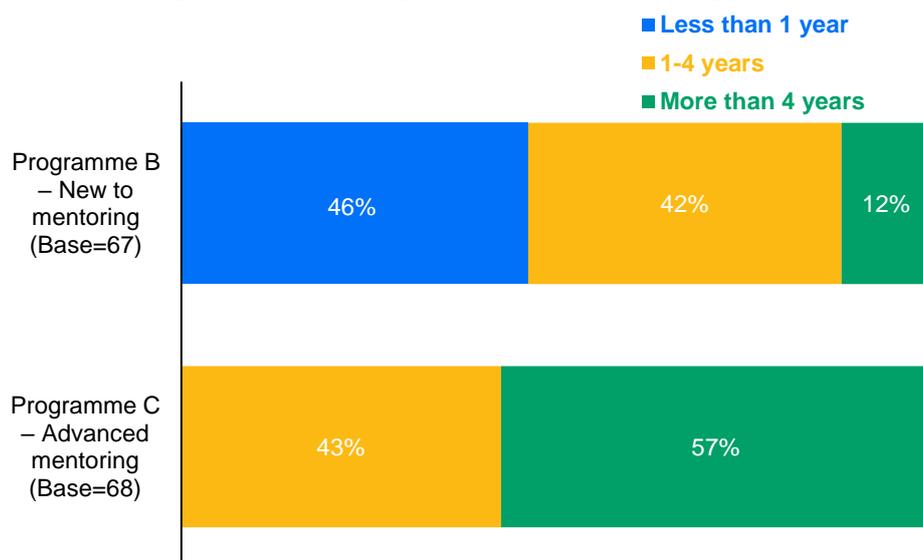
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

In line with their higher levels of previous experience mentoring, those on Programme C were also more likely than those on Programme B to have had previous experience of mentoring training (47% compared with 15%).

More than half of the mentors on Programme C had no previous mentoring training, suggesting that some of their previous experience may have been informal, or not following specific frameworks or approaches.

Graph 6 Previous mentoring training by - programme type
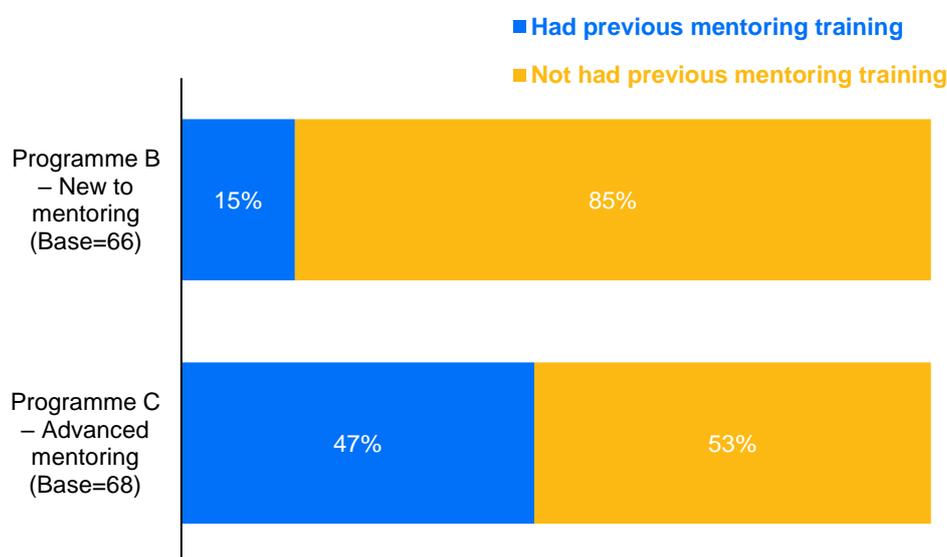
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Previous training came from a range of sources, including:

− As part of qualifications such as Masters level programmes, CertEds, and PGCEs.
− As part of training to support people completing CertEds and PGCEs.
− Through private training providers as standalone programmes, or as part of other courses and qualifications (ranging from Levels 2 to 5).
− As part of internal training offered by their organisation.

- As part of training for Advanced Teacher Status (ATS), the badge of advanced professionalism and mastery in further education and training sector.

Further insights were gathered through the qualitative interviews with mentors and grant leads. All interviewees had mentoring responsibilities, the programme eligibility requirements set out that those on Programme C must have 1-2 years' experience of mentoring colleagues and for Programme B they must have the opportunity to mentor others between October 2020 and March 2021. The mentoring responsibilities could be in relation to supporting the development and induction of teachers who had recently entered the sector, supporting professional learning and development to improve teaching, learning and learner outcomes, or supporting and addressing underperformance.

2.2 Motivations for taking part

Participants cited a range of reasons for wanting to take part in the training. These related to perceived benefits for their own professional development, and benefits for their organisation.

In terms of personal benefits, participants felt the training would be relevant to the coaching, mentoring and support activities they were already carrying out in their roles. They hoped that the training would make their mentoring more impactful – with positive outcomes on wellbeing and retention for mentees. Typically, participants said that they were highly committed to their existing coaching and mentoring responsibilities and enjoyed them. They wanted to develop their knowledge and employ more rigorous and structured practices. Interviewees discussed commitment to their own continuous professional development as well as that of their colleagues and this was a clear motivating factor for applying for the programme. Some mentors considered the training built on previous CPD they had undertaken.

Many on Programme C stated that they wanted to refresh their knowledge and were keen to understand current thinking on mentoring. One experienced teacher on the advanced programme saw the training as a means to move closer to their mid-term goal of moving into teaching on the CertEd Further Education and Training programme.

In terms of benefits for their organisation, participants (particularly those on Programme C) mentioned that one of the reasons they had applied for the programme was the fit with wider work in their organisation on mentoring. In these cases, there tended to also be a strategic focus from other senior leaders in the organisation on improving mentoring. In some instances, the need to create a more formal, structured mentoring programme had already been identified and the training was seen as aligned to this strategic objective.

Grant leads confirmed this drive for improvements in mentoring programmes, and there were examples of providers at varying stages in a process to improve mentoring in their organisations. For example, one grant lead explained that they had for a couple of years been trying to move to a more developmental and less judgemental approach, particularly in relation to observation. Another was similarly seeking to move away from 'being judge and jury' and to being more supportive in mentoring relationships. In other providers, their work on mentoring was not conceptualised in this way, but rather about a move to a more formal, consistent, and structured approach. In one provider (a large FE college), they wanted to raise the status of their existing mentoring programme. They reported that there were few existing training opportunities for mentors and they wanted being a mentor to have 'kudos and status' and be seen as a professional development pathway. For all of these providers, where mentoring was already a priority, there was a view that the mentor training programme came at the right time and would support their efforts.

In a few providers, there was not yet senior commitment to improving mentoring and it was hoped that the training would help make the business case for the need for an improved programme to be established.

Grant leads discussed the business and organisational benefits they hoped for that had led to their support for the application. In some instances, participants had identified the training opportunity and brought it to them to discuss. They had agreed to support the application because they could see benefits for the individual interested in terms of their confidence, motivation, and development but also potential impacts for the organisation. These related primarily to achieving improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Providing improved support for new teachers, particularly those coming from industry with no previous teaching experience, was commonly mentioned. Supporting dual professionalism and the transition from industry was recognised as a particular challenge for FE, and there was a view that good mentoring is an important part of the solution. Linked to this, some grant leads mentioned improved retention as a long-term benefit they hoped to see from improved mentoring.

The role of the grant in decision-making and how it was spent
There was consensus among grant leads that the grant was useful for arranging teaching remission and offsetting the costs of someone spending time on the programme. Some providers reported that without the grant they would not have applied for the training and it would have been impossible for them to offer their staff the opportunity to participate. For others, the grant was helpful, but the main driver for taking part was their assessments of the benefits, and potential impacts for the organisation. In these instances, it was nonetheless recognised that without the grant, they would have been less likely to have been able to create as much time and space for reflection and practice, meaning benefits would have taken longer to realise. Grant leads who were not senior leaders in their organisations highlighted that the grant offer made it much easier for them to make the internal business case for the training.

The grant was used in a number of ways to facilitate participation. Most commonly it was used to pay for secondments or short-term contracted staff to provide teaching cover. There were also examples of the grant being used to arrange teaching remission for mentees so they could participate more effectively in mentoring.

3. DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

Summary
− There was a sound process in place for the development of the programmes and there was a good level of quality assurance.
− Providers heard about the training programme from a range of sources and found the application process straightforward.
− Suggested improvements were bringing the application process forward to earlier in the academic year to help with arranging timetables for those allocated places, and provision of more detailed information. There were some instances of mentors not having the right level of prior knowledge for the programme they were on, which additional information and more screening, would help overcome.
− There were high levels of satisfaction and engagement with the training (Kirkpatrick Level 1) and participants perceived it as relevant to their contexts.
− Mentors, grant leads, and delivery staff highlighted many strengths of the training. These included: the delivery model, opportunities for peer networking, quality of input from trainers, resources, opportunities for roleplay and to participate in Action Learning Sets and flexibility and support to help people catch up if they had to miss a session.
− A key enabling factor was high levels of support for mentors from within their organisations, as well as the online mode, which increased accessibility.
− The main challenges experienced related to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on providers, which affected their ability to participate effectively in the programme and for some, caused withdrawals from the programme, which may not otherwise have occurred.
− Early problems with the move to online only via the FutureLearn platform caused some confusion to learners, delays to starts, and subsequent timetable clashes. These were resolved over time.
− There were mixed views on whether information about the time commitment for the programme was clear enough at the start, and related to this, some participants reported difficulties fitting the training into their busy schedules.
− There were mixed views on the balance of time spent on different learning activities, but the delivery partner responded to feedback and this was resolved.
− Some grant leads considered there could have been more information on expectations for the grant lead role.

3.1 Development of the programmes

ETF commissioned a specialist education consultancy to design and deliver the mentor training programmes. A competitive tendering process was carried out to appoint a suitable contractor in June 2020. The brief issued as part of this process se out expectations of the guided learning hours for each programme and the key mentor training activities that should be included. The original brief was that the programme would be delivered as a blended learning programme using a learning management platform such as Moodle and face-to-face training. A shortlisting and interview process was conducted, which identified a successful delivery partner.

Shortly after the delivery partner was appointed, there were inception meetings between key staff, including the project manager and lead authors at the delivery partner and subject specialists at ETF. These meetings were used to ensure clarity on the aims of the programmes and to look closely at the three programmes A, B and C to ensure differentiation and progression between

them. When a clear framework spanning the three programmes had been established, the lead authors began development of the programmes. They were responsible for briefing and coordinating with module authors. The lead authors for each strand worked closely together to ensure the planned differentiation and progression were achieved and to peer review each other's work. Further, a small academic expert group comprising experts in mentoring in FE and teaching and learning specialists was convened. This group served as an additional internal mechanism for peer review and quality assurance.

As well as ensuring coherence and alignment across programmes A, B and C, the lead authors also liaised with the academic consortium delivering the framework, guides and evidence review. This work was being developed in parallel and so ongoing contact was important to make sure the new mentor training programmes were fully informed by the information emerging from the other strands of work.

A short time into the programme design and development phase, a strategic decision was made at ETF that all online CPD should use the FutureLearn platform to deliver online knowledge-based content. This replaced the planned use of the Moodle online learning management platform. The delivery partner had some limited previous experience of the FutureLearn platform but had not used it extensively. Further, due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was decided that face-to-face elements would take place as virtual sessions using video conferencing platforms. The possibility of returning to some face-to-face delivery was kept open initially, but as it became apparent that restrictions were going to remain, the decision to use fully remote delivery throughout was made.

Feedback from the delivery partner
The delivery partner considered that the process for developing the programme had gone relatively smoothly. This was attributed largely to the skills and experience of the team designing the programme and the authors. Additionally, the brief from ETF set out the requirements clearly and support from ETF mentoring and technical specialists during the early development phase was perceived to be useful.

However, the shift from a blended learning approach using a Moodle and face-to-face sessions, to use of FutureLearn and fully online delivery posed challenges primarily due to the compressed timelines for development. The delivery partner team had to familiarise themselves with and test a new platform in a short space of time. Differences in functionality between FutureLearn and Moodle were identified that took time to understand. Where these differences affected plans for delivery, it took further time to find solutions. Some examples included not being able to share Word documents easily, and the use of automatic communications in FutureLearn. Despite the support from ETF and good technical assistance from FutureLearn, this caused delays to the start of the programme. Due to the testing of FutureLearn, the delivery partner team was not able to complete the development work on the programmes before they were launched and had to continue working on developing the programmes while they were live. This was not ideal, and it was acknowledged a longer lead in time for development and familiarisation with FutureLearn would have been beneficial to avoid these early teething problems.

3.2 Recruiting participants
The mentor training programmes were advertised through a range of channels including the ETF website, ETF bulletins and newsletters, DfE, the Association of Colleges, social media, sector publications, and through various government communication channels.

The eligibility criteria for Programme B were that applicants should be new or relatively new to mentoring, and for Programme C that applicants had two or more years of experience of mentoring.

Both programmes required that providers were based in England, ESFA-funded, and that a senior leader in the organisation approved the application. The application form required applicants to write a short statement about why they would like to undertake the training. It also asked applicants to confirm they understood the learning requirements and could commit the time needed, that mentoring of mentees was a core element of the programme and that there was organisational support for this, and that the grant was to be used for remission of teaching responsibilities and other permissible costs. The delivery partner reviewed the application forms submitted and then passed those selected to ETF for approval.

Feedback from providers and the delivery partner

According to participating mentors and their grant leads, the ways in which they heard about the training programmes was varied, reflecting the range of channels used for promotion by ETF. Some mentors identified the opportunity themselves and then discussed it with their line managers – effectively volunteering or 'self-referring' for the opportunity. In other providers, senior leaders either promoted the training opportunity widely within the organisation or approached particular individuals.

Feedback from mentors and grant leads indicated they found the application process straightforward. The form was clear and easy to complete and they felt there was sufficient information for them to decide if the training was relevant for them. A few mentioned that it would have been helpful to have clearer guidance on who would benefit most from each of the programmes. It was also suggested that the availability of training should be advertised earlier in the academic year before timetables are decided. This would make it easier to organise remission and teaching cover to ensure staff can participate effectively.

Trainers delivering the programme noted that some mentors participating on Programme C did not have sufficient experience to be on the advanced programme. They had done limited previous mentoring and did not have all of the prior knowledge expected. These participants had to put in extra time to do additional reading as provided by trainers, to catch up. They considered that for future programmes, the recruitment process should be adjusted to ensure better checking of the suitability of candidates for the programme they were applying for. Grant leads agreed and highlighted some examples where they felt their staff members were not on the right programme.

3.3 Approach to delivering the training

Following the decision to move to fully remote delivery on FutureLearn, both programmes were designed using a 'flipped learning'[13] approach. Programme B had 10 modules and Programme C had 12, with action learning sets, mentoring practice, and evaluation within each. For most modules there was more than one method of delivery. Typically, for each module a learner was asked to undertake some preparatory work, for example accessing content such as articles, videos, or case studies on FutureLearn before participating in a virtual group training session with a trainer, followed by reflection. Participating mentors were assigned to a cluster of eight learners with a trainer, who worked with them for the duration of the programme. Some activities were undertaken in larger groups of 24, bringing three clusters together. For each cluster, there were designated windows outside of the group training session slot when the trainer was available.

In the research interviews, the mentors, the delivery partner, and grant leads were asked about their experiences of the programme. This included questions about how useful the different components of the programme were, their views on the approach taken, the accessibility of the programme and

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[13] Replacing direct instruction in the classroom with preparatory student material to focus on the most essential learning activities within the synchronous virtual classroom as discussed in Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012) Before You Flip, Consider This, Phi Delta Kappa, Vol. 94: 2, pp25-25.

mentors' ability to participate effectively. Each of these themes is relevant to **Level 1 of the Kirkpatrick model** and participants' immediate reaction to the mentor training programme.

Overall, participants' immediate reaction to the training was positive. It was commonly reported that taking part was enjoyable and the different learning activities were engaging. This was particularly welcomed in the context of challenges in participants' personal and professional lives caused by the Covid-19 pandemic:

> *"For me it has been an absolute breath of fresh air in an utterly miserable time. It has given me optimism for the future."*

> MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, FE COLLEGE

The programme instilled commitment to the improvement and refinement of mentoring skills. Ninety percent of survey respondents reported that they would recommend the mentor training programme to others wanting to develop their mentoring skills.

What worked well
Generally, **the delivery model** of having a dedicated half-day for self-directed learning using FutureLearn before a virtual group training session, followed by reflection, was valued by participants and the delivery team. They found there was benefit in having time to read independently ahead of the group session and to then use the time with peers for discussion and sharing of experiences. Participants also tended to be positive about their reflective journal. These elements, combined with their own mentoring practice, provided a comprehensive training experience:

> *"The sandwich effect, so you do your reading before and then you get together and do the sessions and then you reflect afterwards. And that's the practical as well, so you do that as well as theory, and by building in the reflection you've got a complete package."*

> MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING PROVIDER

Participants and grant leads were positive about the **online mode** and felt that this provided a rich learning experience.

> *"The Zoom sessions have been so interactive and you have to think, and you have to talk, you're not just listening... In that respect, they've got it right, because I want to do and I want to learn"*

> MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, GENERAL FE COLLEGE

Some who had been sceptical at first expressed surprise at how well online delivery worked. A few participants noted that even though the training was originally intended to include some face-to-face components, having it all online made it more accessible. They felt that added travel time to training sessions would have made it harder to participate in all sessions and would have added to the challenges of managing the programme workload alongside the demands of teaching and other responsibilities. These views about the benefits of the flexibility of online delivery were echoed by the delivery team.

Participants and the delivery partner emphasised that the **opportunity to network and share experiences with colleagues** in other organisations was a key strength of the programme. Nine out of ten survey respondents (91% on both programmes) agreed or strongly agreed that they had actively engaged and collaborated with other mentors in their cohort/study group. Qualitative interviews indicated this was facilitated primarily through the group training sessions on Zoom and

break-out sessions within these. Participants found it useful to hear about challenges others were experiencing as well as about how they were managing their mentoring programmes:

> "Opportunities to network with other people from around the country is always a good thing and seeing how they're doing things in their institutions and reflecting on how that's the same and how that's different from what we do, I think that's been really, really useful".

MENTOR, PROGRAMME B, GENERAL FE COLLEGE

Many mentors commented that there was a good quality of discussion in break-out groups, and that everybody was able to participate and make a positive contribution. A few mentors commented they hoped that their clusters would remain in touch following the end of the programme. Some reflected that there was good diversity of types of participants in their group, combining people in different roles and from different provider types. For most, this was positive and added to rich conversations and insights from a range of perspectives and contexts:

> "It's been a really worthwhile programme; I've learnt so much. I've been able to work with colleagues from right across education and that's been invaluable."

MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDER

The **quality of input from trainers** was emphasised as a strength of the programme. The majority of survey respondents (96% of those on both Programme B and C) agreed or strongly agreed that trainers had the relevant knowledge and experience. Of those who responded to a question about the best feature of the programme (73% of respondents), a third (33%) indicated the expertise and attitude of the trainers as well as the benefits of 1:1s with trainers. Mentors commented on the high level of skills, knowledge, and expertise among trainers. Trainers were considered to provide useful feedback, which helped mentors to develop their understanding and practice. They reported their trainers were supportive and that they facilitated group discussions effectively, encouraging exploration of issues and helping the group to develop their thinking. One mentor commented:

> "I really enjoyed the course, I thought the tutors were excellent, and the community of practice opportunities were very interesting and helpful"

MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING PROVIDER

Trainers themselves emphasised that they worked closely as a team and felt this strengthened the training. They noted that they had varying backgrounds – some from within education and others outside – and learned from each other to develop their own practice as mentor trainers. There were examples of trainers working together to deliver group sessions, with thought given to who was best-placed based to lead on a particular section given their skills and experience. This was thought by trainers to work particularly well and some mentors also commented on the variety of backgrounds of the mentors as a strength.

In addition, the **dedicated administrator and IT support** provided by the delivery partner for the project was acknowledged by mentors, grant leads and the delivery partner as an important feature of effective delivery. This role had an initial responsibility for assigning people to clusters and then led on timetabling issues and coordination between trainers and participants. They arranged alternative sessions where required and were responsible for communications with mentors. Additionally, at each group training session, there was someone on hand to provide IT support and to help anyone who was struggling to join and participate. This enabled trainers to focus on facilitating the session without distraction.

Enjoying the mentor training programme was another reported immediate impact for the mentors, both new and experienced.

Some participants highlighted the **triad roleplays** as a key strength of the programme. They found it beneficial to experience mentoring from the different perspectives of mentor, mentee and observer and felt the exercise generated open discussions about practice and questioning. One participant described this as 'powerful experience.'

At the time of the interviews, **Action Learning Sets**[14] had recently been introduced to the programmes. Participants generally considered this a useful way to share problems and identify solutions and highlighted the benefits of sharing information confidentially with peers from other organisations. Some mentors in Programme B who had not previously participated in an Action Learning Set, reported it took a little time to adjust to the way of working and to identify appropriate questions to ask of colleagues, but they found the approach useful. When asked in the survey, only 68% of mentors from Programme C agreed or strongly agreed that they found the action learning sets useful (compared with 84% of mentors from Programme B). It is likely the timing of the survey impacted this response, with some of the mentors having not completed this module at the point of responding.

Participants valued the **resources on FutureLearn.** The majority of survey respondents (97% on Programme B and 91% on C) agreed or strongly agreed that they found the resources (videos, handouts, reading material etc) that had been shared helpful. Of those who responded to a question about the best feature of the programme (73% of respondents), over a quarter (28%) indicated the quality of and access to FutureLearn materials and resources. Mentors commented in interviews that the resources were of high quality and provided relevant, interesting stimulus for the group work. Many mentioned the wide range of types of resources, which included videos, audio materials, case studies and academic articles. Some mentors stated unprompted that they would use the resources in future as they took forward their work on mentoring. Generally, after getting used to the platform, participants found FutureLearn to be easy to navigate. Some mentors really valued the differentiation between core and extension reading, which they felt helped them to manage their time and to pursue reading and learning in areas of particular interest.

The **programme content** was widely seen as equipping mentors with the knowledge and skills they required. Mentors enjoyed the mix of theory and practice, which improved their knowledge and confidence in their role as mentor. 94% of mentors in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that they found the resources (videos, handouts, reading material etc) that have been shared helpful. Some more experienced mentors (on both Programmes B and C) said they had initially been concerned the programme content would not be sufficiently advanced but this had not been the case and that the programmes had developed quickly.

The **flexibility of the programme** was highlighted by some participants as an important feature. Examples included support from the delivery team to attend an alternative group session if they missed their normal session and **tailored support from trainers**. Mentors reported they could contact their trainers if they had questions or particular problems. Those who did found their trainers responsive and helpful. For example, a mentor on Programme B explained: "I've got my own named tutor and I've had a couple of sessions with him, and I've spoken to him about one mentee who I thought might be a challenge before I worked with her...That was really good, it just reassured me

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[14] These are peer learning and support groups that meet regularly to resolve issues and challenges, as discussed in the ETF guide www.et-foundation.co.uk/networks-joining-pack/attachment/etf-guide-to-action-learning-sets/ [Accessed 13 April 2021]

really beforehand." Similarly, there were examples of trainers offering extra 1-1 sessions to help mentors who missed a session to catch up. Those on the advanced programme valued the experience of supervision and mentoring from their trainer: 88% of survey respondents reported that they found the 1:1 sessions with a programme trainer useful. Many reported this as a new experience, which was positive and developmental. The proportion was slightly lower for survey respondents on Programme B (79%), which may be explained by the lesser emphasis on 1:1 supervision in the design of the programme.

Finally, there were relatively high levels of **support for mentors from within their organisations.** The survey asked the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a range of statements relating to the support and enablers they have in their organisational context. As shown in Graph 7, respondents were mostly positive in their views on the support they are receiving from their organisation, with over 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing that a range of enablers are in place. Most notably over 8 in 10 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- Senior leaders in their organisation were supportive of their participation in the mentor training programme (82% for Programme B and 90% for Programme C).
- Their organisation is committed to mentoring (78% for Programme B and 84% for Programme C).
- (*asked of Programme C participants only*) their organisation can support them in implementing systematic changes to the current mentoring approach (84%).

Further, the majority (92% for Programme B and 91% for Programme C) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there were appropriate spaces (online or in person) in their organisation for meeting with mentee(s), considering Covid-19 protocols.

Graph 7 Aspects of organisational support where respondents <u>agree/strongly agree</u> - by programme type

■ **Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=66-67)**
■ **Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=67-68)**

Statement	Programme B	Programme C
There are appropriate spaces (online or in person) in my organisation for meeting with my mentee(s), taking into account Covid-19 protocols	92%	91%
Senior leaders in my organisation are supportive of my participation in the mentor training programme	82%	90%
My organisation is committed to mentoring	78%	84%
My organisation provides the time I need to be able to participate effectively in the training programme	78%	78%
My organisation values the role of mentors	73%	82%
My organisation provides the time I need to put my learning into practice and meet with my mentee(s)	73%	81%
My organisation can support me in implementing systematic changes to the current mentoring approach	69%	84%
There are opportunities for me to network with other mentors within my organisation	66%	78%
My organisation facilitates a professional learning community for mentors	49%	59%

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph (these are variable due to a small number of participants choosing not to respond to some statements).

In providers where more than one mentor was participating, colleagues provided each other with important mutual support and collaboration. For example, in one provider with 5 participants taking part at the same time, weekly meetings were held with a quality improvement lead present to discuss and reflect on learning and implications for the organisation. There were also other examples of participants within a provider supporting each other with reading requirements, by sharing the additional reading between the group and summarising for each other for efficiency.

Line managers and grant leads were also an important source of organisational support. Grant leads supported mentors by helping them to identify mentees and, crucially, by arranging teaching remission and helping to re-arrange timetables where necessary. There were many examples, across all provider types, where the ETF grant had enabled grant leads to arrange for teaching cover to be provided to support effective participation. Previous research (e.g., Hobson and colleagues, 2015) has highlighted that part-time working can be a barrier to engagement in professional learning activities in the FE sector, in this research there were examples of how the

grant was being used to pay for additional hours. There was an example of an adult and community education provider using the grant to extend the working hours of a part-time tutor to enable their participation in the mentor training. There was also an example of sessional tutors being paid for the hours they took part in mentoring sessions.

Key challenges

While the training had many strengths, mentors, grant leads and delivery partners did report some challenges with the provision and the context in which the training was taken place – these often were the mirror image (or reverse) of the aspects of effective delivery discussed above.

The **Covid-19 pandemic** meant the mentor training programmes were launched and delivered in extremely challenging circumstances. Although providers re-opened in Autumn 2020, they had to adapt to physical distancing requirements, which meant extra time and resources spent on ongoing risk assessments as well as moving some teaching online from face-to-face as part of a blended learning approach to accommodate physical distancing. This was at a time when there were increased staff absences due to sickness and self-isolation. There were subsequent closures early in January 2021, which meant providers closed, except for the delivery of certain provision for vulnerable learners. As well as adapting to this shift to remote learning, some FE professionals were coping with their own children being at home due to school closures as reported by the mentors. For mentors participating in the programme, these extra demands in trying circumstances affected participation. Some mentors had to withdraw because they could not cope with the training requirements (see sub-section on 'Withdrawals' in section 3.3, Approach to delivering the training), while others continued but found the workload harder to manage. There were examples of grant leads supporting participants to manage their workloads and for some this enabled them to continue participating effectively.

Mentors, grant leads and members of the delivery team talked about 'teething problems' and **disorganisation in the early stages of the programme**. Specifically, mentors and grant leads felt communications about the timetabling of the programme could be improved. Mentors and grant leads reported that insufficient notice was provided about when participants needed to be available. This caused difficulties in re-arranging timetables to accommodate the training. Mentors and grant leads also noted that the programme modules did not map onto the weekly schedules used in FutureLearn, and on which automated communications about upcoming work were based. This led to confusion among participants. From the delivery partner's perspective, it was acknowledged that the change to timings caused by the move to FutureLearn during the development phase was not ideal and likely affected early experiences of the programme. Participants who were offered a place on the programme after it had already started, did not understand the reasons for this. Interviews with the delivery partner indicate it is likely that places became available unexpectedly due to participants withdrawing, so better communication with these mentors would have been welcomed. This was generally reported to be 'quite stressful' as individuals had to catch up in their own time and felt 'out of their depth initially'. They commented on the extra support offered by the delivery partner though. Generally, both late starters and other participants who perceived issues early on, reported that these were resolved relatively quickly (within a few weeks) and programme delivery became smoother and more stable. This was also the experience of the delivery team. One mentor commented:

> *"If you'd ask us that at the start, it would have been a very different picture. It's evolved and it's improved and I would advocate it to others."*

MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, FE COLLEGE

Some participants also commented that the **balance of time spent on different learning activities was not right at the start**. In particular, they felt the group Zoom sessions were not long enough and that there were not enough break-out sessions. In response to feedback and in recognition of the value of the group discussions, the delivery partner extended the length of the Zoom sessions and built in more break-out groups, which was seen as a strength by participants. One participant noted that future programmes would benefit from more break-out sessions in the early sessions to help participants to get to know each other and build good relationships as a foundation for the remainder of the programme.

There were **mixed views on whether information about the time commitment for the programme was clear enough** at the start. Some mentors and grant leads felt they had understood what time was required to take part and that this had been borne out in practice while other mentors and grant leads felt they had not and that the requirements had been understated and exceeded the hours specified on the grant letter. Grant leads also quite frequently mentioned that they had not understood when signing up for the programme that participants would need to be available at a particular time each week. They had thought there would be greater flexibility for participants to choose which sessions they attended and when they spent time on learning activities. They suggested programme information could be clearer and more explicit so that providers and individuals could make informed decisions about whether to take part. A few participants also suggested that it would be worth in future programmes, building in an **induction week**. It was suggested this could provide an overview of approach and content so there were clear expectations, give an opportunity for people to get to know each other and provide time for familiarisation with FutureLearn.

Fitting the training in with busy schedules was a challenge for some participants. Some mentors were able to block out a full morning or afternoon to accommodate reading, group training session on Zoom and reflection, although in a few instances mentors reported it was hard to fit in the pre-reading in the one-hour slot allocated before the group session. Other mentors only had remission for the Zoom session itself and had to fit reading and reflective activities around this in their free time, including evenings and weekends. There was one instance of a participant having to teach for half an hour during their group session so they had two Zoom calls open at once. The reasons for not being able to block out the full amount of time required in their schedules varied. For some mentors this related to short notice about timings, meaning it was too late to arrange cover; others worked in a specialist/niche vocational area and staff shortages meant there were no other staff who could cover. Grant leads also explained that it tended to be easier for those in roles with reduced teaching responsibilities e.g. teaching and learning coaches or newer members of staff who had increased time allocated to CPD, to fit the training in. For some, the third national lockdown and closure of providers facilitated participation and their ability to complete all programme-related activities because they had more flexibility with their time. However, some staff had to continue with face-to-face teaching e.g. because they were working with vulnerable learners and for these participants, it was harder to fit in the required work. There were also mixed views on the days and times that the training was scheduled, reflecting the varied commitment and timetables of participants. Some considered having a slot spanning the lunchtime period worked well but others found this awkward. Similarly, on some days, the training started at 11.30, which for some affected both their morning and afternoon schedules making juggling other commitments harder.

There were **mixed views on the duration of the programme** among mentors and grant leads. A common view was that the six-month duration was appropriate, offered time and space for significant learning and development and comfortably accommodated the 40-50 hours of mentoring

practice required. Another view expressed by a small number of mentors (across both programmes) was that the programme was too short and, did not allow sufficient time to recruit mentees to participate. Some grant leads and mentors on Programme C for advanced mentors, considered the programme duration unrealistic for developing a full internal proposal for an organisational mentoring programme.

For a few independent training providers and adult and community learning providers (including voluntary sector organisations), **having a mix of provider types within a cluster was seen as less helpful**. They felt that the organisational contexts of others in their group were so different that discussions were not always relevant to them and they did not gain the full potential benefits from peer conversations. These participants suggested in future considering groupings and clusters more carefully. Similarly, one senior leader who took part in the training (there were few overall - see section 3.2 on 'Recruiting participants' above) felt that being in a group with more junior colleagues meant discussions were less useful for them.

FutureLearn is intended to facilitate Communities of Practice through online conversations and, for example, the ability to leave comments on resources and engage in online debate and discussion. Some trainers felt that **Communities of Practice were not built through FutureLearn**, although they did develop through the group training sessions. They were uncertain whether this was related to the technical functionality of FutureLearn or lack of engagement and time on the part of mentors. Mentors tended to discuss FutureLearn in terms of access to resources and learning materials rather than as a means to connect with peers.

Although some participants found the provision of extension reading material helpful, others found the **volume of resources and reading materials too high** and would have preferred fewer sources of information. One suggestion for future programmes was more organising and grouping of documentation on FutureLearn into folders to assist with ease of navigation and downloading. Similarly, the majority of participants thought the model of pre-reading, group session, followed by reflection and practice helped to consolidate and extend knowledge over time but a few interviewees found this structure led to repetition.

Withdrawals from the programme
Overall, those who began the programme engaged effectively, participated in the range of development activities, and were motivated to learn (as demonstrated by the 90% completion rate). Mentors, delivery partners and grant leads indicated that the delivery partner worked flexibly to accommodate participants' schedules at the start and during the programme to facilitate participation. For example, if a mentor was unable to attend their scheduled Zoom session in a given week, arrangements were made for them to attend an alternative session. There were also several examples of trainers providing one-to-one catch-up sessions so individuals could continue to participate.

There were nevertheless withdrawals from the programme. The following sources of information were analysed to understand withdrawals: data collected by the delivery partner on the numbers of people withdrawing and their reasons for this; analysis carried out by the ETF; feedback from seven participants who withdrew from the programme directly to the evaluation team either in a short interview or by email; and email correspondence between a provider and ETF.

As of early March 2021, 42 withdrawals from the programme were recorded, plus another 32 non-starters (who either withdrew before programme commencement or who were ineligible for places). Nearly half of these were people who:

- Left the organisation (7 people).
- Employer reasons which included furlough, redundancy and in one instance, a provider went into liquidation so jobs were lost (12 people).

Among the remaining people who withdrew from the programme, as well as those who did not take up their place, the reasons most commonly cited included: not being able to find cover to allow them to participate in the scheduled sessions, sometimes because timetables for the year were already set by the time the training programme schedule was released; not understanding the time commitment when they applied; workload and capacity issues; a change of job role which meant that they no longer had mentoring responsibilities; Covid-related reasons such as their own sickness, staff shortages or home-schooling commitments; other sickness and bereavements.

One provider withdrew five mentors from the programmes, stating concerns about the quality of the programme as a reason. They felt delivery was disorganised, resources did not meet their needs, the structure of the programme was not clear or coherent, the flipped learning model was not useful and the reading was too onerous. Other mentors and grant leads also mentioned some disorganisation and confusion over the timetable in the early stages of the programme but reported these as 'teething problems' that were resolved. Similarly, other mentors commented on the reading requirements but noted that it had been made clear to them that there was a shorter set of core reading materials, and then extension materials for those who wanted to undertake further reading.

Where withdrawals happened early in the programme, people who were on the waiting list were able to join the programmes and were allocated into an existing learning cluster.

3.4 The role of the grant lead
Typically grant leads supported participating mentors by helping them to identify mentees and meeting with them periodically to discuss their experiences of and progress on the programme. The frequency and depth of these discussions varied. In addition, the grant leads played a role in gathering monitoring information for submission to ETF and participating in monthly monitoring calls with the ETF programme team.

The monitoring requirements of the programme i.e., monthly submissions on progress from grant leads to ETF and participation in a monthly call with the project team at ETF, appear to have helped to ensure that grant leads stay in touch with mentors about the programme. Grant leads reported that they tended to receive updates from mentors in advance of the monthly submissions. However, a few mentioned that the frequency of monitoring calls was too burdensome for a six-month programme and suggested a stream-lined approach for future programmes.

A few grant leads suggested they would have valued a session relatively early on that brought grant leads from participating organisations together and provided an overview of the expected role of the grant lead in the programme.

4. LEARNING IMPACTS

Summary
- Over 85% of new and experienced mentors in the survey agreed that they had improved in their confidence, knowledge and understanding because of taking part in the programme. This was in relation to a wide range of areas of relevance to mentoring.
- Participants had an increased understanding of the role of a mentor, key mentoring principles and different coaching and mentoring frameworks as a result of taking part in the programme.
- Mentors reported increased confidence as a result of having knowledge of more tools and techniques. The evidence-informed nature of the programme also helped to build confidence.
- Skills that were improved were listening skills, questioning techniques, how to structure mentoring sessions, reflection, and information and approaches that would help them also with their professional practice and their line management roles.
- Grant leads, while not always aware of the detail of what had been learnt, also reported improvements in understanding, knowledge, and skills. Some gave specific examples of mentors discussing models and approaches to mentoring more confidently with them or demonstrating new ways of working.
- Many mentors on Programme C for advanced mentors considered the training was a useful refresher. Grant leads too recognised that the training was beneficial for experienced practitioners and could help to reinvigorate their mentoring practice.
-

Level 2 of the Kirkpatrick framework concerns the learning impacts from training. Both the qualitative interviews with mentors and grant leads and the mentor survey gave a positive view of learning from the mentor training programme, with clear evidence of gains in understanding, knowledge, and skills.

In the survey, most new and experienced mentors were positive regarding the extent to which they agreed they had improved their confidence, knowledge, and understanding because of taking part in the programme. Over 85% agreed or strongly agreed that they had increased their knowledge and understanding in a range of areas (see Graphs 21 and 22 in the Appendix).

While only a small proportion of experienced mentors disagreed that they had improved confidence, knowledge, and understanding as a result of the programme (and none strongly disagreed), confidence in participating in Action Learning Sets was a key area where nearly one-third (30%) experienced mentors neither agreed nor disagreed. As noted previously, it is likely the timing of the survey impacted this response, with some of the mentors having not completed this module at the point of responding.

This survey evidence is supported by the qualitative findings: when asked what they had gained from the programmes, mentors reported that they had strengthened their knowledge of mentoring principles and the mentoring role, improved their skills in mentoring techniques and increased in confidence.

4.1 Understanding the role of a mentor (mentoring principles)
A better understanding of the role of a mentor, grounded in theory and using models provided on the programme was a theme in the interviews. Seen in both mentors on Programmes B and C this

included the different coaching models that they had learnt about including OSCAR[15], GROW[16] and the 'Wheel of Life'[17].

New mentors thought that these models were a useful theoretical foundation for understanding the role of a mentor and helped distinguish this role from other types of support, such as line management support or support provided by Advanced Practitioners.

In the survey all new mentors (100%) agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their knowledge of different mentoring strategies. Furthermore, nearly all (99%) of the new mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a mentor. Experienced mentors echoed this: 97% of the experienced mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their knowledge of different mentoring strategies, and 96% that they had improved their understanding of the role of mentoring supervision for mentors.

Mentors thought it was important that they would be able to draw upon several different models according to the situation they were responding to with their mentees. For example, a mentor described 'Wheel of Life' as useful for supporting mentees with personal and emotional issues with another describing the OSCAR model as useful for looking at 'distance travelled'. Another experienced mentor felt they had a greater understanding of what model to use in what circumstance as a result of the programme. Experienced mentors described the importance of moving away from judgemental approaches to mentoring.

> *"Being involved in the training has opened up my eyes up to what mentoring means and what mentoring has meant in the past…There's a real desire to change mentoring to a non-judgemental approach that helps people to develop their practice."*
>
> MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDER

Some of the mentors on the advanced skills programme had undertaken mentoring training before. This programme was praised for situating the mentoring models in the context of Further Education – something that mentors thought had not come from other training they had received.

The grant leads were also able to comment on how the training had increased mentors' knowledge and understanding, and the different models they could draw on to support staff.

> *"[The mentor] talks about different models of mentoring, and that wasn't in her vocabulary before. It was more like she was just a critical friend… rather than one that's really going to help and is linked into what it should be."*
>
> GRANT LEAD, PROGRAMME C, SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

4.2 Improved confidence

Improved confidence was reported as a result of the grounding of the programme in evidence. Having 'more tools in the toolkit' (Mentor, Programme C, General FE) gave the mentors on both programmes more confidence in their role of mentor and for experienced mentors when considering how to implement a new mentor programme in their own organisation. In the survey, 96% of the new mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their confidence in being an effective

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[15] Jackson, P.Z. & McKergow, M. (2006) The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE, 2nd edn, London, Nicholas Brealey.

[16] Whitmore, J. (2002) Coaching for Performance: GROWing people, performance and purpose. 3rd ed. London: Nicholas Brealey.

[17] As referenced at www.thecoachingtoolscompany.com/wheel-of-life-complete-guide-everything-you-need-to-know/ [Accessed 14 April 2021]

mentor.

This confidence was recognised by grant leads too, who had seen the mentors grow in self-assurance over the duration of the training programme so far, again both for those on the new to mentoring programme and those on the advanced skills programme.

4.3 Improved mentoring skills
The improved skills that interviewees reported were listening skills, questioning techniques, how to structure mentoring sessions, reflection, and other relevant skills such as adult learning styles and information and approaches that would help them with their professional practice and their line management roles.

- **Listening:** This included becoming more comfortable with silence, looking out for what is not said, and paying attention to body language. This skill was practised in the sessions through role play. Some grant leads were also able to identify this skill development. In the survey, 96% of the new mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their knowledge of questioning techniques and listening skills.

  "I've definitely improved my listening skills while I've been practicing the mentoring role…it's all about listening."

  MENTOR, PROGRAMME B, FE COLLEGE

- **Questioning techniques:** For mentors on both programmes this included what 'active' listening is and understanding the importance of asking questions rather than giving answers to support the mentees in coming up with their own solutions.
- **Structure:** How to structure mentoring sessions and why. For example, the importance of including time to discuss wellbeing within the session.
- **Adult learning styles:** Feedback on this was more mixed (not programme dependent). The training materials indicate that this module was intended to cover the relevance of andragogy (the practice of teaching adults) for mentoring. Some mentors reported that it was useful to learn about theories of adult learning because they had not covered this in their training. However, for others they thought that there was an over-emphasis on 'learning styles' during the session which is an outdated way of understanding andragogy.
- **Reflective practice:** This was something that many mentors reported having some awareness of prior to the mentor skills training, but the programme gave them an opportunity to reflect on their mentoring and consider the importance of reflection for mentoring more generally. Experienced mentors reported that they took the opportunity to review their practices and capabilities.

  "When you do this day in day out you take it for granted. It has made me review my own practice."

  GRANT LEAD, PROGRAMME C, GENERAL FE

- **Providing feedback and support:** This was identified by some grant leads who could see from feedback they had received that the mentors were gaining new skills and ways of managing and providing support for people. This included being able to give feedback effectively and sensitively. In the survey, 96% of the new mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved knowledge of how to provide support to improve their mentees' emotional resilience'
- **Setting up a mentoring programme:** For those on the advanced skills programme they gained specific knowledge about setting up a mentoring programme in their own organisation: this is discussed in the upcoming section on putting the learning into practice. In the survey, 91% of the

experienced mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their understanding of how to set up a mentoring programme or enhance an existing mentoring programme in their organisation.

Grants leads generally agreed about a broad improvement in skills among mentors. Some were not able to go beyond this type of general commentary because they were not close enough to the details of the work the mentors do. Others though were able to make specific comments about areas of improvement (as noted above). Overall, grant leads were able to identify that mentors had gained knowledge and skills of benefit to their mentor role.

> *"It's been about developing skills around how to make those mentoring meetings more effective. Getting the actions out and making it productive, and that's been brilliant."*

> GRANT LEAD, PROGRAMME B, SPECIALIST COLLEGE

4.4 Skills revision

It was more common for mentors in the advanced skills programme to report that the training had been a useful refresher for them, than for those on the new to mentoring programme, as could be expected. There were some on the new mentor programme that reported that the programme was a useful way to reconnect with learning and ideas that they had been involved with in the past. For those that had previous experience of mentor training some sessions felt repetitive, but most welcomed the chance to revisit and update their previous learning.

A grant lead reported that their mentor had described the training as a 'refresher' in terms of the models and approaches, but they could also see how the mentor was reinvigorated by the programme and it had shaped their thinking about how to develop a college-wide programme. Another saw that this training offered their mentor a way to use their learning in their setting. A further grant lead supported this view:

> *"It's refined and refreshed what she already knew. It has consolidated, for her, the rationale that this needs to be core to the way we operate as a service and it needs to be central to our practice, and we need to revisit it as an organisation. Because of that she will lead and drive that forward which will be really positive for her and for the team as a whole."*

> GRANT LEAD, PROGRAMME C, ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING

5. IMPACT ON PRACTICE

Summary
- Over 8 in 10 mentors had achieved or made good progress towards using new ideas and approaches to mentoring as a result of the programme (84%). The majority pointed to using or making progress towards using a range of practices.
- Setting up their mentoring programme or enhancing an existing mentoring programme in their organisation was an important area of behavioural impact for mentors.
- Mentors described how they were moving their organisations' mentoring programmes towards a development model of mentoring.
- Changes to behaviour that supported a more developmental model of mentoring included improved listening and questioning skills, a more individualised and mentee-led approach, improved support for resilience and wellbeing and improved self-reflective practices.
- New mentors described how the training had given their mentoring sessions more structure: the way that sessions started and finished, goal exploration and goal setting, and setting out the boundaries of mentoring as different to line management or Quality Improvement.
- Experienced mentors were making 'some' or 'good' progress on the additional aims of their training programme: managing the mentoring programme, implementing action learning sets, peer supervision, and evaluation of their programme.
- While grant leads were not able to comment in detail on changes to mentors' practice, they observed that generally mentors were fully committed to the mentor role and appeared to be drawing on learning from the programme in their mentoring. They observed greater structure to mentoring and a good frequency of contact.
- The evaluation also uncovered current mentoring practice in the FE sector with information about how many mentees and how often they meet, whether within the line management chain or outside of it, how mentors are matched to mentees and the range of issues covered in mentoring sessions.
-

There was clear evidence that participants had begun to apply what they had learnt through the training to their practice and role as a mentor (Kirkpatrick Level 3).

Mentors who took part in the survey were asked about the extent to which they had applied the knowledge gained from the training to different aspects of their mentoring practice. Overall, both Programmes B and C had a high level of self-reported impact on mentors' behaviour and actions. The majority of mentors felt they had achieved or made some or good progress towards achieving a range of practices, with only a minority who had not started or felt they were unlikely to achieve each of these. Survey respondents were able to use their own definition of what 'good progress' meant to them, as this would be different in each setting. Interviewees identified several broad behavioural impacts. These related to setting up their mentoring programme, using techniques that supported a more developmental approach to mentoring, and embedding reflective practices. There are potential limitations to the strength of evidence for these Level 3 impacts as the interviewees were still participating in the programmes at the time of the research.

5.1 Setting up a programme
Setting up a mentoring programme in the mentor's own organisation was one of the aims for both programmes B and C.

Progress in establishing or enhancing a mentoring programme in a mentor's organisation varied. Those on Programme B were more likely than those on Programme C to say they had achieved this (17% and 13% respectively); however, overall, those on Programme C were more likely to have made good or some progress towards this (81% compared with 65% of Programme B). Those that had not yet started spoke of making plans to deliver presentations on a new mentoring programme to their senior leadership teams. Only a very small number of participants on both programmes felt they were unlikely to achieve this goal.

Graph 8 I have established a mentoring programme in my organisation or enhanced an existing programme in my organisation
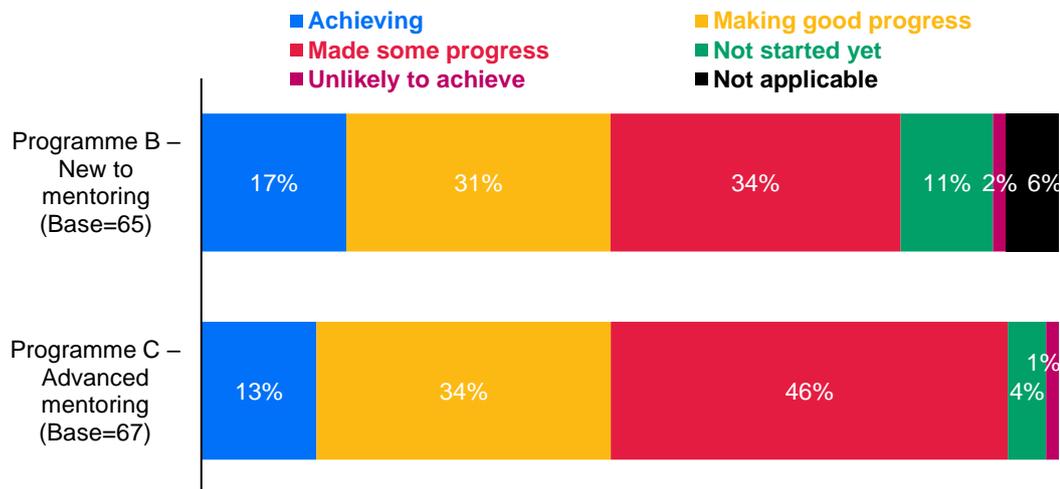
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Where experienced mentors were building on existing mentor programmes, the training had helped them enhance what was there already, using information from the training to make plans and have conversations with senior colleagues and management about how to progress mentoring in their organisation. This included information about how mentors and mentees would be selected, introducing peer supervision for mentors, creating mentor programme materials such as information about the structure of sessions and reflective logs. In the survey, 93% of the experienced mentors agreed or strongly agreed they had improved their understanding of the role of peer supervision (see Graph 22 in the Appendix). Some mentors on the advanced programme described the programme as giving them added impetus to progress and develop their own programmes.

> *"The programmes that I developed were much more developmentally focused than I had had in the past. I think this change in focus was due to the training"*
>
> MENTOR, PROGRAMME C, PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDER

Mentors on Programme B for new mentors were also considering how to set up or change their own organisations' mentoring programme. One mentor who had colleagues on Programme C, described how the programme had given her lots of ideas of how mentoring could be structured within the college: to formalise the process more generally, introduce a 'job description' of what it means to be a mentor and mentee, and specifying the length of time mentoring should be done for.

5.2 Implementing a more developmental approach to mentoring

Overall, over 8 in 10 mentors had achieved or made good progress towards using new ideas and approaches to mentoring as a result of the programme (84%). Two-fifths of mentors in both Programmes B and C (42% and 39% respectively) had achieved the aim to use new ideas and approaches to mentoring, with the remainder having made good progress (48% for Programme B

and 38% for Programme C) or some progress (9% for Programme B and 20% for Programme C).

Graph 9 I have used new ideas and approaches to mentoring

Achieving · Making good progress · Made some progress · Not started yet · Unlikely to achieve · Not applicable

Programme	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet
Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=66)	42%	48%	9%	
Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=66)	39%	38%	20%	3%
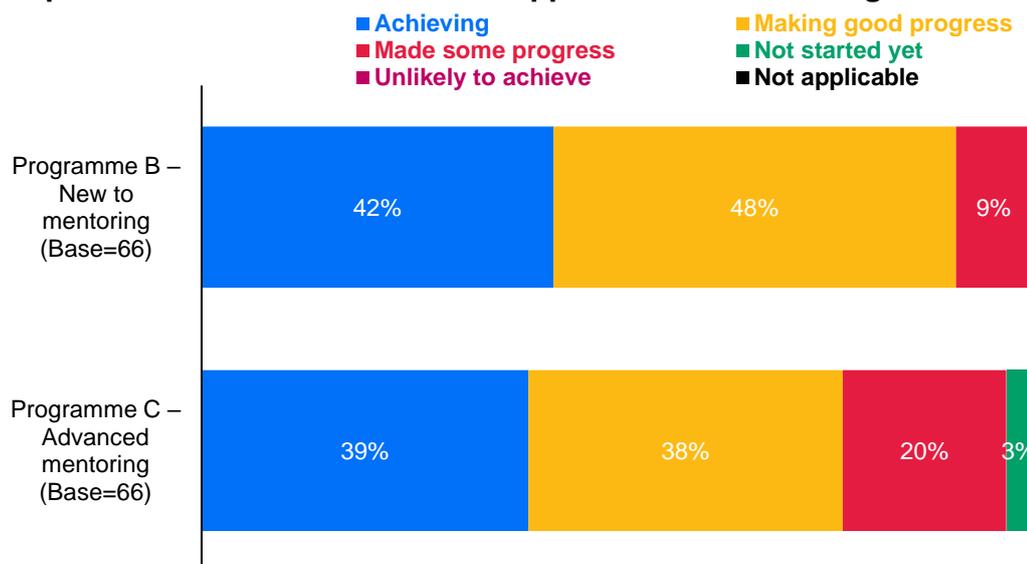
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Many specific examples of how new ideas and approaches had been used to establish a more developmental approach to mentoring practice were provided in the survey and qualitative interviews.

Listening and questioning skills

The previous chapter on Level 2 learning impacts showed that listening and questioning skills were a key learning impact for mentors. Mentors on both programmes had also been able to put these skills into practice.

In the survey, those on Programme B were more likely than those on Programme C to say they had achieved this (41% and 33% respectively), or that they were making good progress (55% and 43% respectively). Those on Programme C were more likely to have made some progress towards this (22% compared with 2% of Programme B). This is likely to reflect to some degree the greater emphasis on listening and questioning skills in the content of Programme B.

Graph 10 I have used better questioning and listening techniques than previously

Achieving · Making good progress · Made some progress · Not started yet · Unlikely to achieve · Not applicable

Programme	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet
Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=66)	41%	55%	3%	2%
Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=67)	33%	43%	22%	1%
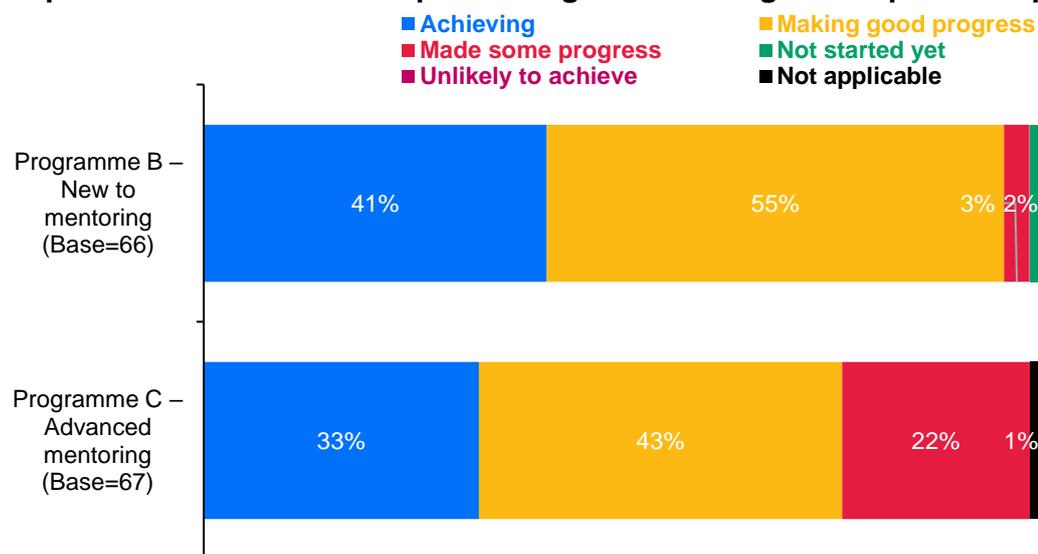
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

For new mentors, they recognised that they were using new listening and questioning techniques in their mentoring – using open questions to get to 'the root of the problem' and using the models such as GROW to help formulate their questions. Some mentors described how it was the use of these models that made the mentoring sessions different from their Quality Assurance roles.

> "I could look back at them [early mentoring sessions] and know that isn't anywhere near where I'm doing it now. But we had nothing when we first started, and all these tools and things we've learnt as we've gone on."

> MENTOR, PROGRAMME B, FE COLLEGE

Mentors recognised that using questions in this way created a shift from mentoring sessions being directed by mentors to being more mentee-led.

A more individualised, mentee-led approach

The mentors were able to draw from the range of models they had learned about to have a tailored approach to mentees. Over one-third of mentors in both Programme B and C (35% and 34% respectively) had achieved the aim to more effectively tailor their mentoring to mentees' individual needs, with the remainder having made good progress (56% for Programme B and 45% for Programme C) or some progress (9% for Programme B and 18% for Programme C).

Graph 11 I have more effectively tailored my mentoring to my mentees' individual needs
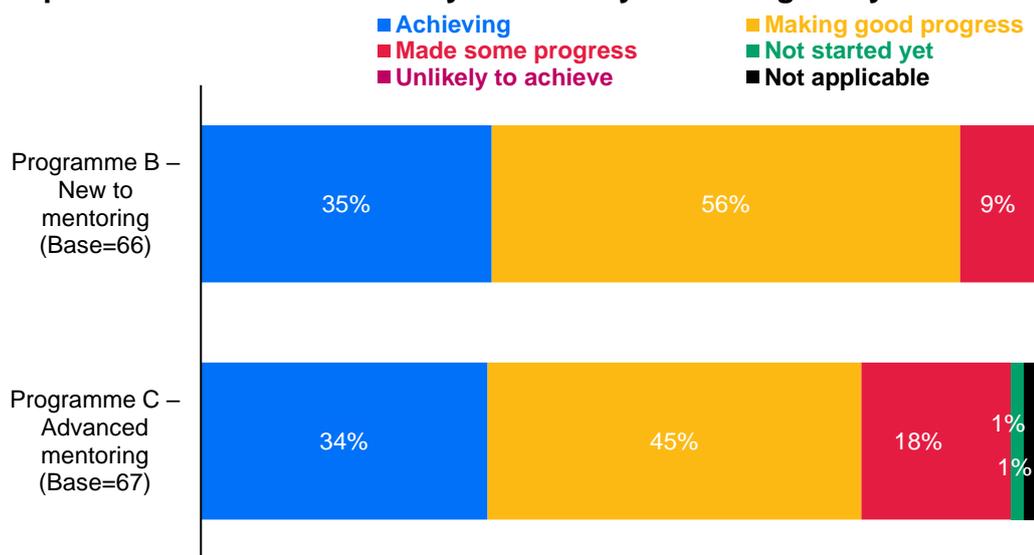
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

More experienced mentors described drawing on a wider range of models and frameworks rather than relying on those they had become accustomed to over the years. A few also described that they more commonly adapted models and integrated features of different models to suit the circumstances and the individual, rather than feeling they had to keep rigidly with a single framework.

Experienced mentors on the advanced skills programme also described how the models and questioning and listening techniques had helped to create a more developmental model of mentoring with **space for the mentee to describe their goals**. For example, one mentor on the advanced programme described how she now starts each session by finding out from her mentees what their goal is. She compared this to her previous practice, where she would set the agenda for each session and tell her mentees what the focus of the session would be. Now, it is more about what they would like to focus on. They explore different options together and mentees make their own decision about what to do.

Nearly one-third of mentors in both Programme B and C (30% and 28% respectively) had achieved making changes to the way they give feedback to mentees, with the remainder having made good progress (53% for Programme B and 48% for Programme C) or some progress (15% for Programme B and 19% for Programme C).

Graph 12 I have made changes to the ways I give feedback to mentees
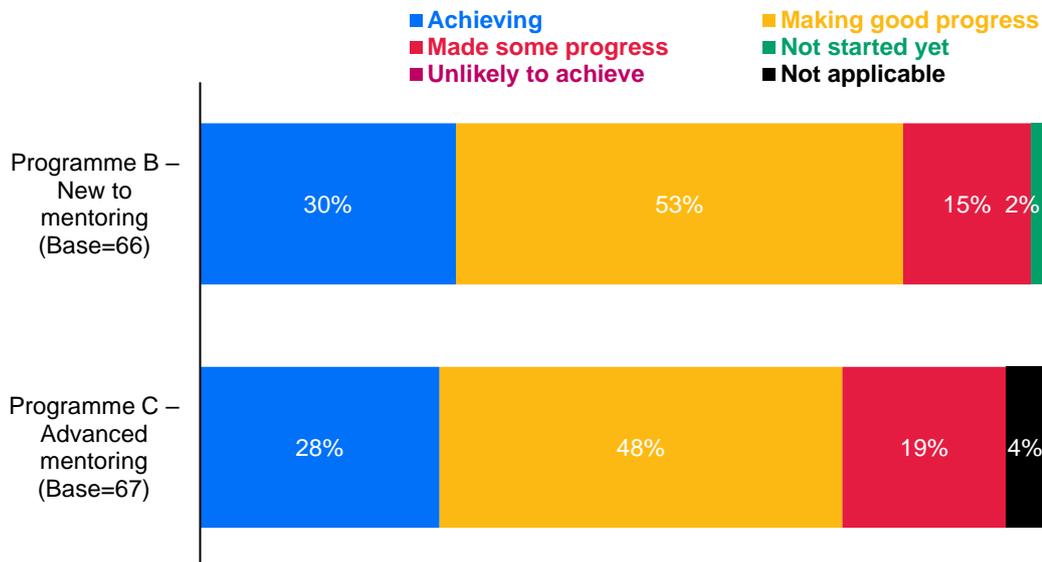
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

A mentor on Programme B, for example, explained that observation is a key part of her mentoring practice. She described a supportive and mentee-led approach in which her mentee identifies areas they are finding challenging and would like support with. Together they identify a suitable lesson for the mentor to observe and then meet afterwards so they can reflect and can give feedback. In this instance the mentor reflected that 'I've learned to be perhaps not quite as judgemental, and to approach things in a slightly different way.'

Improved support for resilience and wellbeing

Over one-quarter of mentors in both Programme B and C (27% and 26% respectively) had achieved being able to provide more effective support to improve their mentees workplace resilience with the remainder having made good progress (48% for Programme B and 42% for Programme C) or some progress (24% for Programme B and 29% for Programme C).

Graph 13 I have provided more effective support to improve my mentees' workplace resilience
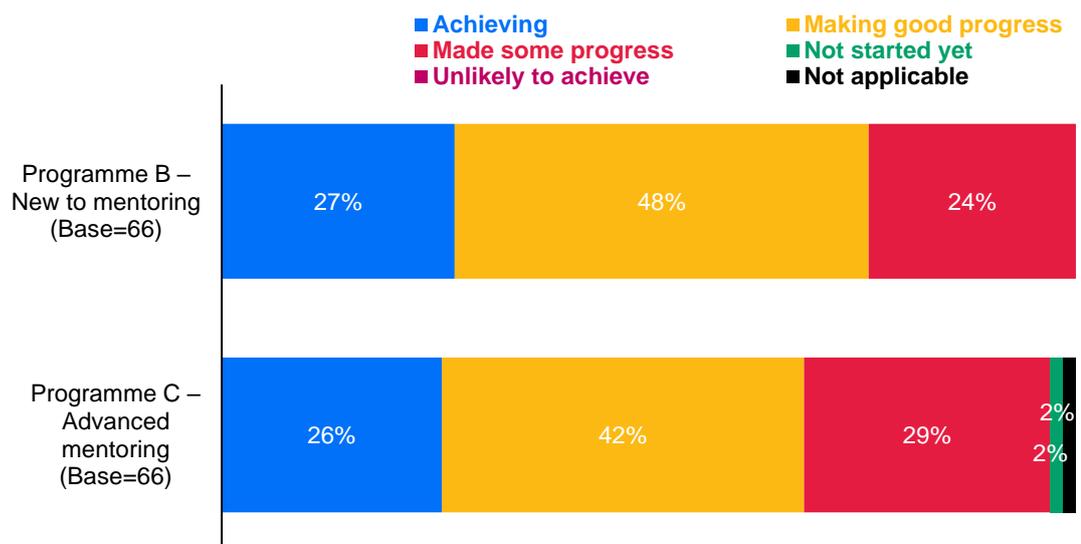
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Some mentors articulated that an important aspect of workplace resilience was having a safe and confidential space to discuss emotional wellbeing, where mentees felt listened to and supported. Within some provider organisations the culture in relation to metal health and wellbeing was more developed. For example, one voluntary and community sector provider working with vulnerable learners described that the ethos of supporting learner wellbeing extended to staff in their organisation. In other providers, emotional health and wellbeing were rarely discussed. One mentor on Programme C who worked in this type of organisation noted that as a result of the training they were starting to introduce a greater focus on wellbeing to support emotional resilience in their mentoring practice. They commented that overall, in their organisation 'there's a get on with it attitude' and a view that 'it's best not to touch on it too much.' The training has taught them that focussing on wellbeing is really important and they are now introducing discussion about emotional wellbeing in their mentoring sessions which they have never done before.

Improved self-reflective practices
The programme's impact on mentor's engagement in self-reflective activities varied. Those on Programme B were less likely than those on Programme C to say they had achieved this (27% and 36% respectively); instead, those on Programme B were more likely to say they had made some progress towards this (58% compared with 40% of Programme C).

Graph 14 I have engaged in more self-reflective activities than previously

Legend:
- ■ Achieving (blue)
- ■ Making good progress (yellow/orange)
- ■ Made some progress (red)
- ■ Not started yet (green)
- ■ Unlikely to achieve (magenta)
- ■ Not applicable (black)

	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet	Not applicable
Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=66)	27%	58%	14%		2%
Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=67)	36%	40%	18%	1%	4%
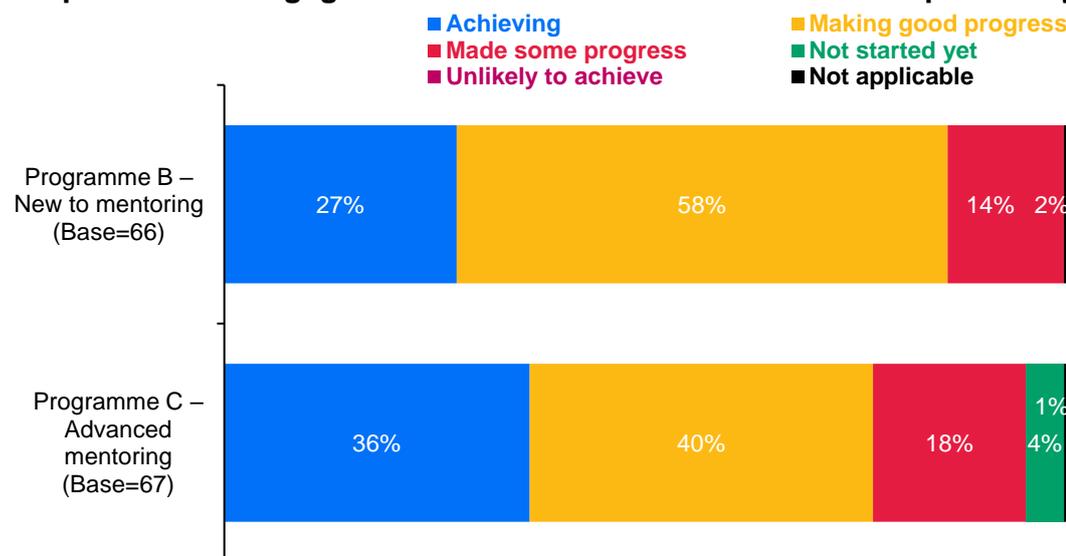
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Nearly one-third of mentors in both Programme B and C (32% for both groups) had achieved being able to reflect on the impact of their mentoring on mentees more effectively than previously, with the remainder having made good progress (52% for Programme B and 45% for Programme C) or some progress (15% for Programme B and 18% for Programme C).

Graph 15 I have reflected on the impact of my mentoring on mentees more effectively than previously

Legend:
- ■ Achieving (blue)
- ■ Making good progress (yellow/orange)
- ■ Made some progress (red)
- ■ Not started yet (green)
- ■ Unlikely to achieve (magenta)
- ■ Not applicable (black)

	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet	Not applicable
Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=66)	32%	52%	15%		2%
Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=65)	32%	45%	18%	3%	2%
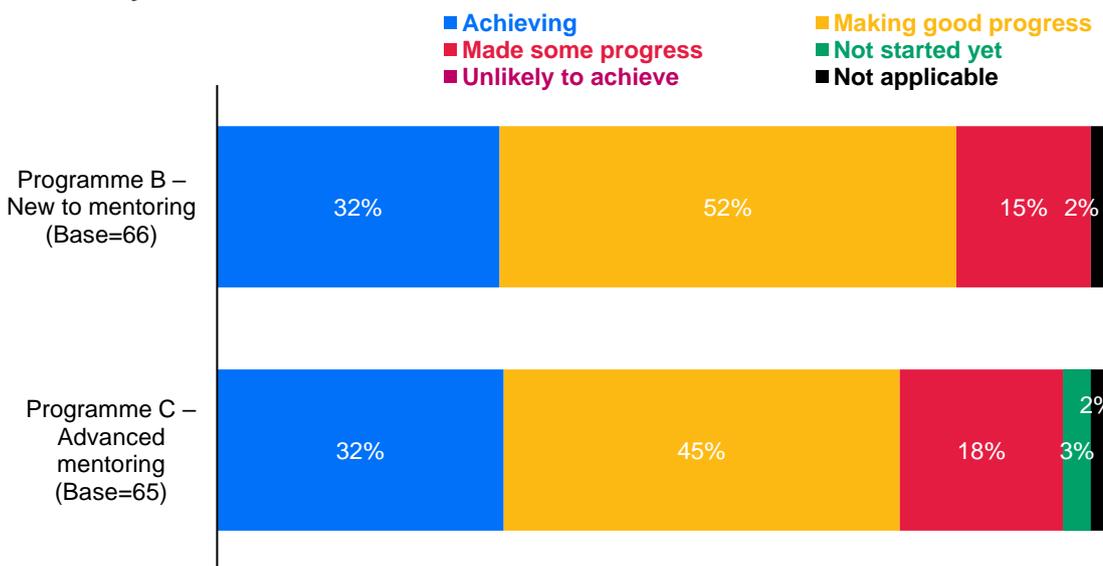
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

For example, one mentor on Programme B, who worked in a FE college described how she now thinks a lot about her practice after mentoring sessions and make notes in a reflective learning journal. Other mentors had set aside time after their group training sessions to make reflective notes. For many mentors, the increased self-reflection was specifically in relation to taking a more supportive and non-judgemental approach to mentoring.

> *"The impact will come through what I've been able to learn, to be slightly less judgemental in my approach in the mentoring that I do. […] It [the training] caused me to question what and how I did things. It caused me to look at my own practice from a different point of view"*

5.3 Implementing an improved structure for mentoring

New mentors (on programme B) were more likely to describe how the training had given their mentoring sessions more structure. This was about structure within the sessions – with changes to the way that sessions started and finished so that they ran to time and included goal exploration and goal setting. It was also about the mentoring as a whole – setting out the boundaries of mentoring and how it differed from other forms of support such as line management. This was particularly important for a mentor with several mentees, two of which they line managed directly and another was in their line management chain.

In the survey, nearly one-third of mentors in both Programme B and C (32% and 31% respectively) had achieved the aim to 'Establish a mentoring relationship underpinned by appropriate contracting arrangements', with the remainder having made good progress (39% for Programme B and 46% for Programme C) or some progress (21% for Programme B and 21% for Programme C). Only 2% of those on Programme B and 1% on Programme C had not started this yet.

Graph 16 I have established a mentoring relationship underpinned by appropriate contracting arrangements
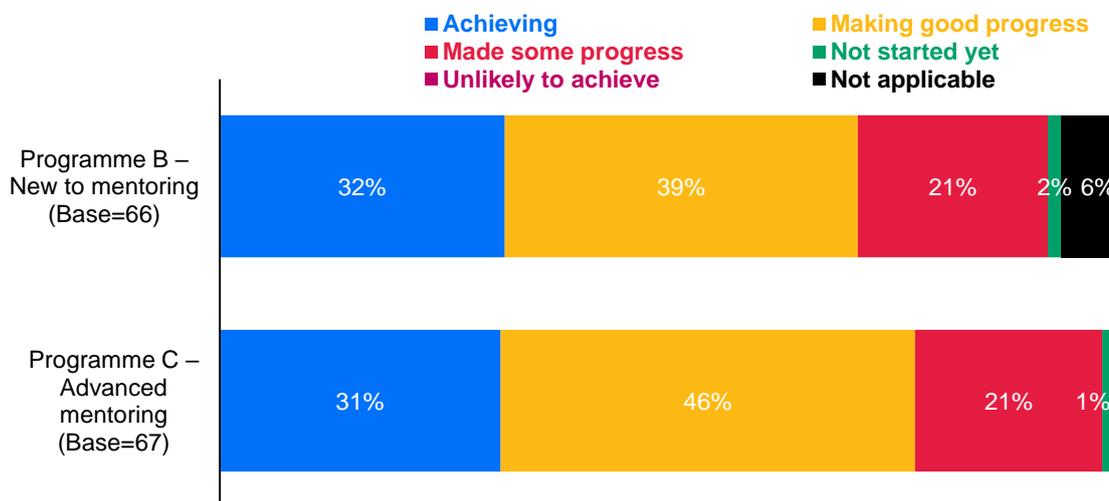
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the mentors in both programmes have found it had impacted on how they plan for mentoring meetings. One-quarter (24%) of mentors on Programme C say it has not impacted on them; however, this is likely due to their previous experience and training meaning no changes were required.

Graph 17 Has the programme impacted the way mentors prepare for mentoring meetings - by programme type
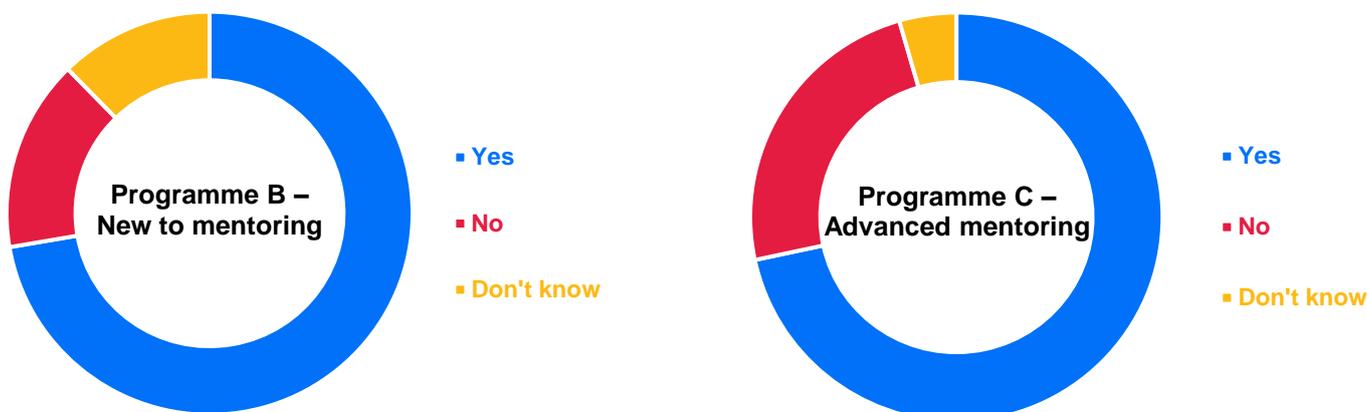
When asked what impact the programme had on their planning for mentoring meetings, nearly two-thirds (62%, 83 respondents) were able to provide a response. Changes to planning included:

- Having clear questions or models prepared ahead of a mentoring session (43%).
- Giving themselves more time to reflect (on their own practice or mentee's improvement) in between mentoring meetings (30%).
- Having more structure and focus during sessions to ensure better use of time (23%).
- Spending more time preparing and planning generally (17%).
- Better use of record keeping (8%).

An experienced mentor (on programme C) described how they had not previously prepared for mentoring sessions. Because of taking part in the training, she prepares and plans, thinking about location of the session, the kinds of questions she can use, establishing goals for the session with the mentee and how they can take forward actions. Overall, she really enjoys the new way of working: 'I really like the way I am doing things now' (Mentor, Programme C, FE college).

5.4 Grant leads' perspectives on changes to practice

Grant leads tended not to be immediate supervisors or line manager of the mentors and predominantly had a supervisory role over the grant requirements for the training, so therefore were not well-positioned to comment in detail on the behavioural impacts that the training had on the mentors. Where the grant leads were able to comment they reported that mentors had embraced their mentoring role. They had seen that the way the mentor had structured the mentoring sessions had changed since taking part in the training and the mentoring reports reflected this. Mentors were also meeting more frequently with the mentees.

5.5 Application of advanced knowledge

Mentors from Programme C were asked about the extent to which they have applied the knowledge gained from the training in some of the advanced aspects targeted at more experienced mentors (these questions were not asked of new mentors on programme B).

As shown in Graph 18, achievement in these areas was lower than in the previous aspects of programme knowledge application; however, this may be as a result of the more complex nature of these elements and also the fact that mentors were only part-way through their training when responding to the survey and so had less time to apply the knowledge to their practice or introduce into practice for their context.

Only 9% of mentors from Programme C felt that they had achieved **managing the mentoring programme** in their organisation more effectively than previously, although over one-third (37%) had made good progress and a further third (34%) had made some progress. Qualitative interviews with mentors supported this, showing that mentors and grant leads were considering future management of mentoring programmes but that this was a long-term project that was in progress.

Seven per cent of mentors from Programme C felt that they had implemented **action learning sets** more effectively than previously, while one-fifth (19%) had made good progress and nearly one-third (30%) had made some progress. Over one-third of mentors on Programme C had not yet started to apply their knowledge of action learning sets more effectively. As noted previously this is likely due to some mentors not having taken part in this element of the training at the time of the survey. There were limited qualitative examples of action learning sets being integrated into mentoring practice within providers although one mentor on the advanced programme described drawing on action learning set principles in her work to use group mentoring to target particular issues within a department she oversaw.

Nine per cent of mentors from Programme C felt that they had established more effective **peer supervision** than previously, although over one-fifth (22%) had made good progress and one-quarter (28%) had made some progress. However, nearly one-third of the mentors on Programme C had not yet started to establish more effective peer supervision.

One-in-eight mentors from Programme C felt that they had **evaluated the mentoring programme** at their organisation more effectively than previously, while one-quarter (25%) had made good progress and nearly two-fifths (39%) had made some progress. However, nearly one-fifth of the mentors on Programme C had not yet started to evaluate the mentoring programme at their organisation more effectively. Some mentors and grant leads described that an appraisal of their existing mentoring programme was planned for the end of the training programme. Grant leads saw this as an important part of the debriefing process and an opportunity to reflect on the learning from the training for the organisation more fully. It is likely therefore that greater shifts in practice related to evaluation of mentoring programmes may be expected at later stages.

Graph 18 Application of advanced knowledge gained from the training - Programme C

Legend:
- Achieving (blue)
- Making good progress (yellow)
- Made some progress (red)
- Not started yet (green)
- Unlikely to achieve (magenta)
- Not applicable (black)

Statement	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet	Unlikely to achieve	Not applicable
I have managed the mentoring programme in my organisation more effectively than previously	9%	37%	34%	10%		9%
I have implemented Action Learning Sets more effectively than previously	7%	19%	30%	34%		9%
I have established more effective peer supervision than previously	9%	22%	28%	30%	1%	9%
I have evaluated the mentoring programme in my organisation more effectively than previously	13%	25%	39%	18%		4%

Source: Survey of mentors. Base=67

5.6 Understanding mentors' current practice

As well as gathering information about ways in which mentors have applied learning from the training, the research looked more broadly at how providers and mentors plan and deliver mentoring and mentor programmes in their organisation.

The **number of mentees** each mentor had since the beginning of their participation on the programme varied. As shown in Table 3, experienced mentors on Programme C typically had higher numbers of mentees. This was also the case for the mentors taking part in the interviews.

Table 3 Number of mentees - by programme type

NUMBER OF MENTEES	PROGRAMME B – NEW TO MENTORING (BASE=56)	PROGRAMME C – ADVANCED MENTORING (BASE=58)
1	11%	2%
2	23%	14%
3	11%	16%
4	23%	5%
5	16%	10%
6-10	14%	29%
11-15	2%	14%
16-20	0%	7%
20+	0%	4%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Where there are large numbers of mentees this includes where mentors are providing group mentoring activities. As one experienced mentor on Programme C described, this could be to support a 'dysfunctional' team within a department, to support them to talk and listen and decide how to take solutions forward.

In relation to the **matching process**, the most common approach was for mentors to select their mentees (30% of survey respondents) but a substantial proportion were also allocated to their mentee by their institution, but not through a formal mentoring coordinator (27%). Mentors on Programme B were more likely to select their mentees on an informal basis (42% compared to 18% on Programme C). The qualitative interviews did not provide examples of formal processes for selecting and pairing mentors and mentees. In most cases, mentors appeared to be selected based on their subject specialism and their perceived skills and strengths as a practitioner (normally judged by Ofsted ratings). Enthusiasm and interest to support colleagues and be a mentor were also an influencing factor in how mentors were selected in providers. Typically, there were no formal selection criteria beyond teaching capability.

Half (51%) of survey respondents had mentees from both within and outside of their **areas of specialism** (see Graph 24 in the Appendix); however, the extent to which mentors engaged only with mentees within or outside of their specialism varied depending on which programme they took part in. Mentors on Programme B were more likely than those on Programme C to only have mentees with whom they share a specialism (37% compared with 10% respectively). This may reflect that those on Programme C had broader roles and remits within their organisations and also possibly a higher level of confidence or ability among those in Programme C to support those outside of their area. More than two-thirds (67%) of the mentors reported that they did not **line manage** any of their mentees, while only one-fifth (21%) line managed some of their mentees, and only 12% line managed all their mentees. This was consistent across both programmes.

The majority of mentors **met with their mentees** either once a fortnight or once a week. In the interviews, the mentors described how the frequency of the meetings could depend on the experience levels of the person being mentored, with newer staff being scheduled for mentoring sessions more frequently than more experienced staff. Mentors also described how the frequency could be tailored according to the issues and pressures that the mentee was seeking support with – so meeting more frequently while the issue was 'live'. The majority of mentors on Programme B and Programme C are happy this frequency of meetings is sufficient (81% and 85% respectively) (see Graph 26 in the Appendix).

Mentors on both programmes reported a high number of **hours per week** allocated to supporting mentees. Nearly half of mentors responding to the survey spent 1-2 hours on this (49% on Programme B respondents and 45% on Programme C, while nearly a quarter spent 2-3 hours (23%). Only 5% of mentors on Programme B reported spending less than an hour a week supporting their mentees but this figure was higher on Programme C (14%) (see Graph 27 in the Appendix).

Mentors report a range of **issues that were covered** in mentoring sessions. For both those on Programme B and C the most frequently covered topics were any difficulties the mentee was experiencing in the organisation (84% and 91% respectively), emotional wellbeing (78% and 84% respectively), and facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment (70% and 75% respectively). Emotional well-being was described in the interviews by the mentors as something that was particularly pertinent during the Covid-19 pandemic when stress levels and emotional

needs have been high, along with changing work practices impacting on work-life balance and stress.

Mentors on Programme B were more likely to offer support to help their mentee develop their subject/vocational knowledge (49% compared with 35% of mentors on Programme C) – this is likely due to mentors on Programme B being more likely to share a subject specialism with their mentees (see Graph 24 in the Appendix). This is discussed further in the next chapter, when considering the impacts of the training programme on staff.

As shown in Graph 19, mentors on Programme C typically covered a higher number of topics than those on Programme B, with nearly half (48%) addressing 9-12 themes (compared with 34% of those on Programme B).

Graph 19 Number of topics covered in mentoring sessions - by programme type
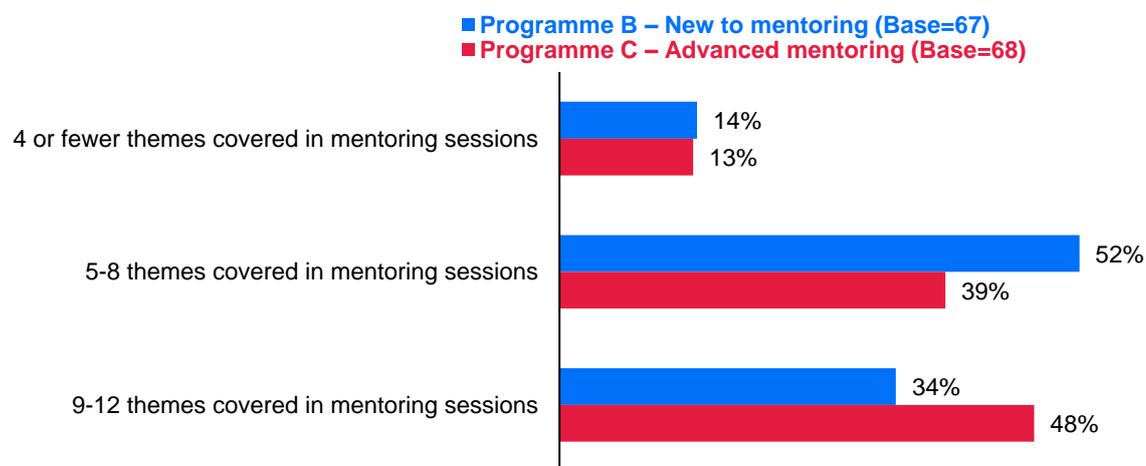
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

One of the areas of interest for this training programme and evaluation was to see if there was any evidence of ONSIDE mentoring.

As seen in the survey and interviews, there is evidence that developmental, non-judgemental models of mentoring were being used and mentors often described most of their mentoring to be like this. There were also times when mentors reported that they used more judgemental models of mentoring where needs were identified for mentees. However, in some cases mentors also described how they were keen to not mentor people that were in need of performance management support to ensure that the mentoring could be non-judgemental, and the mentees could be as honest as possible.

Some mentors described how they were **working with mentees for specific reasons** such as supporting new managers and other staff with new responsibilities, when delivering new programmes or to support with the move to online delivery. There were also requirements for some new teachers and teachers in training to receive support and observations that in some cases were incorporated into the mentoring and in other cases the mentoring was separated from the formal qualification requirements of new teachers.

Observations were being used by some mentors, although not as frequently as they may have done were teaching not being done remotely for much of the spring term. As one mentor described 'It's really hard to talk about their teaching if I am not observing their teaching.' (Mentor, Programme B, FE College).

6. IMPACTS ON ORGANISATIONS, STAFF, STUDENTS AND SECTOR

Summary
− Mentees were very positive about their experiences of being mentored and in the main described a supportive, developmental, mentee-led approach.
− Mentees agreed with mentors and grant leads that taking part in mentoring was delivering benefits for them. These included: improved confidence, resilience, wellbeing, and work-life balance, improved teaching practices and an increased sense of autonomy and self-efficacy.
− The impact on staff wellbeing was particularly important and welcomed this year during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the focus on specific skills such as remote delivery supported staff in new ways of working.
− Mentors and mentees perceived that the mentoring training programme was starting to have an impact on students through the increased skills and confidence of the teachers being mentored.
− There were early indications of the potential of the training to lead to organisational improvement, particularly in relation to improved staff retention. Mentors and grant leads were positive about potential future impacts and mentees' enthusiasm for mentoring. There were many examples of reduced stress, workload and long hours and increased confidence, which are likely to contribute to increased satisfaction in roles and in the longer-term could improve staff retention.
− While it is too early in the programme to see wider sectoral impacts of the programme, for organisations that were part of college groups and other networks they were sharing their positive experiences and raising the profile of developmental mentoring models.
−

The research showed that wider organisational impacts were starting to emerge even though mentors were still on the training programme (Kirkpatrick Level 4). This included benefits for mentees related to increased wellbeing, skills, and confidence. This chapter draws on tripartite views on impact, from the interviews with 33 mentors, 26 grant leads and 27 mentees.

6.1 Impact on staff

The clearest evidence for the impact of the mentoring training programme were the positive effects on staff – the mentees directly and a wider pool of colleagues that had benefited from hearing about the training programme either informally or more formally through in-house training. The impact of the mentoring was described by interviewees across all provider types. The evidence here comes from the survey, the interviews with mentors, mentees, and grant leads.

Mentors in the survey reported a range of impacts they believe their mentoring practice resulting from the training has had on their mentees. For both those on Programme B and C the most frequently perceived impacts include improved resilience, wellbeing, and work-life balance (64% and 69% respectively); improved teaching, learning, and assessment practices (61% and 72% respectively); and an increased sense of autonomy and self-efficacy (70% and 62% respectively).

Mentors on Programme B were more likely than those on Programme C to feel the mentoring had improved mentees workload management skills (66% and 51% respectively); while those on Programme C were more likely to think they had improved mentees' ability to critically reflect on teaching practice (69% compared with 55% of those on Programme B).

Graph 20 Impacts on your mentee(s) resulting from your participation in the professional development programme – by programme type

■ **Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=67)**
■ **Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=68)**

Impact	Programme B	Programme C
Improved resilience, well-being and work-life balance	64%	69%
Improved teaching, learning and assessment practices	61%	72%
Increased sense of autonomy and self-efficacy	70%	62%
Improved communication skills	63%	62%
Improved ability to critically reflect on teaching practice	55%	69%
Improved workload management skills	66%	51%
Improved knowledge of subject-specific and general pedagogy	46%	53%
Improved subject/vocational knowledge	40%	25%

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Mentees were **generally very positive about the support they received** from their mentors and described talking about a range of relevant topics. This applied for both new teachers and tutors and those who had been in the sector for longer. There were no discrepancies in the description of mentoring processes given by mentees and mentors. Typically, both talked about frequent mentoring sessions, a clear structure with goal setting, reflection and review.

Most mentees described their mentoring sessions as a **supportive, confidential space** where they could speak honestly about work-related and personal problems without fear of judgement. In the words of one mentee: 'I think I can be really open and honest, I feel like she's very approachable' (Mentee, Programme C, FE College). Most mentees described being able to set the agenda for mentoring sessions and to identify the issues they wished to talk about.

Some mentees articulated very clearly the benefits of the approach their mentor took, which they **recognised as seeking to empower them to find solutions**. One mentee commented:

> *"The way she uses her questioning technique. It's not a yes/no. I've got to give a description when I'm answering. What I answer is what the next question depends on. She's guiding me with her questions to get to an answer…it makes you think it's your idea. It was probably her*

idea but I come away thinking it was mine!".

MENTEE, PROGRAMME C, SPECIALIST FE COLLEGE

Another mentee echoed a very similar view about the interactions with his mentor:

"He helps you get an idea without giving you the answer. Hugely valuable. [..]I come away from it thinking that I want to start thinking like [my mentor]! That [solution] was in my brain and I didn't even know it!"

MENTEE, PROGRAMME B, FE COLLEGE

A key benefit highlighted by mentees was **increased confidence**. The mentoring helped them plan their tasks and think about how they could approach other colleagues or management with their ideas. In the mentoring sessions they had praise, developed plans, realistic targets and short-term goals which had helped build up their confidence.

"It helps to become more confident in myself and the collaboration is stimulating. It encourages me."

MENTEE, PROGRAMME B, ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROVIDER.

"It just gives me confidence really. I find with people I've worked with in the past I struggle a bit with confidence but I feel with [mentor] being there, it's allowing me to succeed more in my role. Because she's giving me opportunities and ways of working, that I wouldn't ever have thought of."

MENTEE, PROGRAMME C, FE COLLEGE

Some mentees recognised that they had struggled for some time to be confident in their teaching roles and reported a difference since working with their mentor:

"[mentor name] is brilliant at making me take a step-back and going 'actually I did do quite well there' and I'm being too hard on myself."

MENTEE, PROGRAMME B, FE COLLEGE

Mentors, mentees and grant leads all described how important the training had been during a difficult period for education due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and remote learning. It was reported to have been particularly beneficial for **staff wellbeing** as mentoring sessions provided an allocated space for focus on emotional and mental health. Mentees described their mentors asking about their emotional wellbeing and how they were coping. One mentee who suffered from anxiety and depression discussed talking openly with her mentor about this and receiving support and advocacy for this from her mentor. Another mentee who was very new to teaching described that the broad focus on mentoring helped to build his confidence and make him feel secure in his new role.

Linked to wellbeing, mentors and mentees both commonly described a focus on **managing workload** in mentoring sessions. This was sometimes in relation to the added demands of working during a pandemic and sometimes more broadly to the demands of managing a heavy workload with varied commitments. Mentees who were newer to teaching particularly welcomed the support and discussion of workload, as well as lesson planning. They also appreciated the access to resources and tips shared by mentors, and knew that when they tried new things, they would be able to reflect on the success in their mentoring sessions. Some mentees stated that they had saved time in relation to preparing lessons as a result of discussions with their mentor. A mentee

with many years' teaching experience described how he had struggled with workload and routinely worked long hours. Since working with his mentors, he had reduced working hours. He described discussions with his mentor about how to avoid long working hours and instead diverting time to personal and professional development. As a result of the mentoring, the mentee had developed a three- and five-year career plan and felt motivated to gain a HNC qualification.

The new digital skills required for **remote teaching** including classroom management and learner involvement over video conferencing was another Covid-specific challenge that the mentoring sessions were able to support mentees with. A common theme from the mentees was that the mentoring sessions were useful in developing and sharing strategies for engaging students in online lessons. For some, this was a two-way process with both mentor and mentee trying out and sharing techniques for learner engagement. For example, one experienced mentor had reflected on their own capabilities through discussions about online delivery with their mentor.

There were many examples of mentees' **professional development** being supported and of **mentees identifying career paths and areas of interest they wished to pursue**. Mentors described how mentees were becoming empowered to make suggestions for improvements or take on responsibilities or tasks. For a mentee that had a diversity and inclusion role in their organisation, the mentoring sessions had provided 'time and headspace' to think about how they could progress their project:

> *"He's been able to use that to really cleverly lead me to what my role is going to be and how we could utilise my skills going forward"*

> MENTEE, PROGRAMME B, ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROVIDER

For another mentee from an FE college, they have been able to set up new provision to start in September and attributes their progress in this to their mentoring sessions.

> "*I don't believe that we would have got this [new] course set up as quickly as we have.*"

> MENTEE, PROGRAMME C, FE COLLEGE

Grant leads could see that mentees were benefiting from the improved mentoring and becoming more effective teachers. Grant leads also highlighted that mentoring support that was being given to new teacher, including those still undertaking teacher training, was having a positive impact on the mentees' development: the teachers were more positive about their own learning and motivated about their own development.

6.2 For students

Some mentors, grant leads and mentees also believed that the mentoring training programme was having a positive impact on learners, due to the improvement in teaching practice for mentees and for some mentors. For example, the specific skill development that mentors had been supporting mentees with such as classroom management and remote teaching skills. Several mentors described the 'trickle-down' effect of mentoring behaviours and conversations, that the approaches that they took with their mentees would be replicated in the classrooms with mentees and their learners. One mentor that was in a teaching role described how they were doing this too: putting into practice the techniques for developing others that they had learnt on the programme and using these with students.

Other mentors and grant leads also thought that the mentoring techniques used with mentees supported staff wellbeing and could improve their skills, which in turn could affect the wellbeing and outcomes of their students.

"If you've got a teacher who teaches well because they've got the right skills and support, they do their work well and the students achieve."

GRANT LEAD, PROGRAMMES B AND C, FE COLLEGE

Another grant lead reported that they had better student retention on courses where they had previously had problems with the quality of tutoring. As the mentoring had focused on tutors on these courses it was suggested that the mentoring and therefore the training that had made the difference.

6.3 The organisation

Interviewees recognised that while the mentors were still taking part in the training programme it was very early to be seeing direct impact from the mentoring programmes for their organisations. Nevertheless, there were **early indications of the potential of the training to lead to organisational improvement**, particularly in relation to improved **staff retention**. Mentors and grant leads believed that their mentoring helped to increase staff motivation and enthusiasm which they considered would lead to increased staff retention in the longer-term.

"It is a very difficult industry, so I think it will definitely improve retention. And we've got brilliant feedback from the various mentees about that extra level of support and extra time to think through and inform their own actions going forward, it is really important. So it will definitely have an impact on retention, it has had."

GRANT LEAD, PROGRAMME B, FE COLLEGE

Mentees' confirmation that they found the support from more experienced mentors useful, supportive, helpful to build confidence, conducive to reduced stress and improved wellbeing, and sometimes contributing to reduced workload, supports this view.

The mentor training, particularly where more than one mentor had taken part, had gone some way to helping **change the culture** of the organisation. As one grant lead commented, the training had provided their organisation the opportunity to deliver on a strategic objective on mentoring that had only been in place on paper. Mentors and grant leads welcomed the move to a developmental model of mentoring, which was articulated through mentoring agreements or contracts between mentors and mentees. For experienced mentors with some form of established mentoring programme they could see that the perception of mentoring in their organisation was changing, from a more judgemental, sometimes punitive approach to developmental. There was a commitment to maintaining a developmental approach in future. An important aspect of the ongoing shift in culture was having a cohort of trained mentors who were **advocates for further training** and peer support and were committed to making the internal business case for this. Consequently, where providers had multiple mentors taking part, the perceived organisational impacts were greater.

At the time of the fieldwork for this research, many mentors were making progress towards establishing a formal mentoring programme in their organisations but had not yet completed this work. The potential impact of mentoring programmes when they were fully established was recognised by both mentors and grant leads. Some interviewees commented on the added value of the training and the fact that prior to the training, there had been no plans to establish a mentor programme. In other providers, progress appeared to have been catalysed by the training: providers' had started to develop the idea but limited time, resources and capability had meant limited progress. The mentor training programmes helped to speed up progress.

"At that time [of applying for the training] I hadn't really thought about how I'd embed mentoring

into the organisation. I suppose what the course has allowed me to do is think about it has to be embedded in the culture and the framework, to make it clear what mentoring is, and what it can offer."

MENTOR, PROGRAMME B, FE COLLEGE

6.4 The sector

As mentoring was being described as becoming more embedded into the culture of organisations, some of the interviewees believed that the positive impacts would continue, wider than their own staff and learners. The investment in FE staff was welcomed. In addition, one grant lead described how they were part of a large college group and that other colleges in the group were learning about the positive impacts of the mentor training programme and were now considering implementing something similar.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mentor training programmes have been designed and developed effectively and are providing high quality training. The programmes aim to improve the standard of mentoring within the FE sector. This evaluation was conducted mid-way through the training programmes but nonetheless indicates that this aim is being achieved. There is evidence that the training has had positive outcomes related to improvements in mentors' learning and mentoring practice and mentees experiencing benefits from this. There are also early signs of wider organisational impacts emerging.

This evaluation has used the Kirkpatrick (New World) model to examine the effectiveness of the mentor training programmes. This offers a way to understand different levels of reported impact: reaction, learning, behaviour change, and results. Although the evaluation did not establish a counterfactual (i.e. an estimation of what would have happened were the mentors to have not attended the training) through use of a comparison group, the methodology used triangulated views of self-reported impacts.

7.1 Outcomes

Level 1: Reaction to the training

Providers who took part in this evaluation tended to be satisfied with the training and to report positive experiences. Nine out of ten participants agreed they would recommend the mentor training programme to others wanting to develop their mentoring skills. There were clear indications that mentors were well-engaged and motivated by the training to develop their skills.

The marketing for the programmes was successful in recruiting mentors from a range of provider types from around the country with varied subject specialisms and backgrounds. While all had mentoring responsibilities in their roles, the majority had no previous mentor training. Participants were highly committed to their existing coaching and mentoring responsibilities and enjoyed them. They wanted to develop their knowledge and employ more rigorous and structured practices. This indicates significant potential for the mentor training programmes to add value and meet sector training needs.

The opportunity to network and share experiences with colleagues in other organisations was a key strength of the programme. Participants enjoyed the triad roleplays as a chance to practice the questioning skills. Many mentors commented on how much they enjoyed taking part in the mentor training programme because they felt it had given them new skills and a chance to practice them. Action learning sets were new to some and welcomed, but at an early stage at the time of the research and so evidence for these is weaker.

It had originally been planned that the programmes would be delivered as blended learning via Moodle and face-to-face sessions. The delivery partner and mentors recognised that the move to the online only platform FutureLearn created some challenges to delivery in the early stages. The delivery partner team had to familiarise themselves with a new way of delivering and a platform that they had not used in this way before. This caused confusion for mentors, delays to starts and subsequent timetable clashes, which for most, were resolved quite quickly over time. Some of these issues were insurmountable for some mentors and organisations and they withdrew from the programme.

There were mixed views on whether information about the time commitment for the programme was clear enough. For some mentors, the balance of time spent on different learning activities was not right at the start but with support from the delivery partner most of these issues were resolved.

There is some evidence that smaller private training providers and voluntary and community sector

providers did not perceive the programme to be as useful or impactful because there were fewer opportunities to work alongside similar organisations in their group training sessions and break-out groups. Similarly, senior leaders taking part on the programme appear to have gained less value from the discussion with peers.

Level 2: Learning impacts

Through the programme mentors have increased their knowledge and understanding of the mentor role and mentoring principles, they have increased in their confidence to mentor and have increased their skills. Of those surveyed, 100% of new mentors and 97% of experienced mentors improved their knowledge of different mentoring strategies.

Skills that were improved were listening skills, questioning techniques, how to structure mentoring sessions, reflection, and information and approaches that would help them also with their professional practice and their line management roles. Grant leads were also able to provide evidence that mentors were more confident in discussing models and approaches to mentoring.

Level 3: Individual behaviour change

These perceived improvements in knowledge, understanding and skills have translated into changes in mentoring practices, with many promising examples of strengthened practice aligned to an ONSIDE mentoring approach. Mentors were working towards establishing a mentoring programme and were putting into practice their improved listening and questioning skills. Mentors could describe how they were able to use the range of models they had learned about to have a tailored approach to mentees. There were some differences by the programme type that the mentors were on, newer mentors on Programme B reported that their training sessions now had more structure, and they were able to distinguish the mentoring role from other supervisory roles. Experienced mentors on Programme C were making good progress in managing and evaluating their mentor programmes and supporting other mentors with action learning sets and peer supervision. Mentees were generally very positive about the support they received from their mentors. There were no discrepancies in the description of mentoring processes given by mentees and mentors. Typically, both talked about frequent mentoring sessions, a clear structure with goal setting, reflection, and review. Most mentees described their mentoring sessions as a supportive, confidential space where they could speak honestly about work-related and personal problems without fear of judgement. They felt able to bring concerns and problems to mentoring discussions.

Level 4: Wider (organisational) behaviour-change and impacts

Through the interviews and mentor survey, this research has demonstrated that the mentor training programme has delivered benefits for mentees. The support provided by participants mentors is perceived to have led to improved resilience, wellbeing, and work-life balance, improved teaching practices and an increased sense of autonomy and self-efficacy.

Interviewees of all types noted the importance of this programme during a time of stress and uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to support resilience and wellbeing in staff and promote and share good practice and new ways of working.

In addition, mentors and mentees reported that the mentoring training programme was starting to have an impact on students through the increased skills and confidence of the teachers being mentored.

Early indications are that the programme is having a beneficial effect on the sector as the positive experiences of the mentors and their organisations were being shared across FE sector networks.

7.2 Contextual Factors

A range of factors enabled mentors' effective participation in the programme and helped to ensure the potential benefits of the training were maximised.

There was consensus among mentors and grant leads that the grant offer was useful for facilitating more effective participation than might otherwise have been possible. The grant was used to arrange teaching cover for mentors and to pay part-time and sessional staff additional hours to take part as mentees. Some providers reported that without the grant offer they would not have been able to apply for the training.

There were also high levels of support for mentors within their organisations. Previous research (e.g., Hobson et al., 2015) has identified that the 'architecture for mentoring' includes: 1) an institutional commitment to mentoring; 2) physical resources; 3) a collegial institutional ethos; and 4) time resource for mentor preparation.

There was evidence of good institutional commitment: around eight in ten mentors responding to the survey agreed that: senior leaders in their organisation were supportive of their participation in the mentor training programme and that their organisation was committed to mentoring, provided the time to be able to participate effectively in the programme, valued the role of mentors and provided time to put learning into practice. A small minority disagreed that these features of architecture were in place for them. Grant leads were supportive and facilitated participation.

Similarly, physical resources were not a barrier. This was primarily due to online delivery, which made it easier to have spaces for confidential discussions.

A collegial ethos was also present but less strongly evidenced, with just over half of mentors stating their organisation facilitated a professional learning community for mentors and over two thirds stating they had opportunities to network with other mentors in their organisation. In this context, it was beneficial for mentors when other colleagues from their organisation participated in the training as this created peer support. The comparative lack of collegial ethos also helps to explain why the opportunities for peer networking built into the programme were so important and valued.

Time resource for mentor preparation and training was, as noted above, facilitated by the grant offer supporting the training. It should be noted though, that this was not always sufficient and some mentors experienced significant challenges in finding time to participate effectively.

Despite these enabling factors, the wider context of delivering and taking part in an intensive training programme during a pandemic, unsurprisingly, created significant challenges for many people. Providers were dealing with physical distancing, moving learning online, closures and staff sickness and shortages due to the need to self-isolate. The national lockdown created further challenges with some mentors caring for children and young people during school closures. For mentors participating in the programme, the extra demands of the training in trying circumstances affected participation. Some mentors had to withdraw because they could not cope with the training requirements, while others continued but found the workload harder to manage.

7.3 Recommendations

This evaluation suggests that the mentor training programme is working effectively and is well-liked by participants and leads to positive outcomes for mentors, their mentees, and their organisations. In conclusion to this report, the researchers have made a number of recommendations to ensure that these benefits can continue after this cohort of learners conclude their mentor training. These recommendations are directed at the ETF, at FE providers, and the delivery partner that may take forward the training in the future, and mentors themselves.

7.3.1 The ETF

- **Continue to support mentor training for the FE sector:** findings show that there is an appetite for mentor training and an opportunity to add value. Mentors wanted to use the training sequentially to build on their knowledge and experience and wanted colleagues to have the same opportunities. The ETF should continue to work with DfE to ensure that there is strategic support for the programme.
- **Continue to offer differentiated training based on experience and ensure that recruitment allows for accurate filtering of mentors onto the most appropriate programme for their skill and experience level:** in general, asking programme applicants to allocate themselves to programme B or C depending on their experience worked, but the delivery partner noted some mismatches. Clear eligibility requirements and application forms will help to ensure that mentors can attend a programme that best suits their experience, knowledge, and qualification levels.
- **Consider longitudinal research and evaluation to capture the longer-term impacts from the training (relating to Kirkpatrick Level 4):** the approach of the evaluation to include grant leads and mentees in the research has given some insight into Level 4 Kirkpatrick outcomes. In time, more evidence will accumulate about the longer-term impacts of the programme and the ETF should work to ensure that these are captured. The use of pre-and post-programme surveys can help to understand the impact of the training and should be put into place in a timely way for further cohorts of the programme. The ETF should also consider the use of a 'counterfactual' group or quasi-experimental research design to explore other ways in which impact can be measured.
- **Continue to pay a grant to enable access to the programme:** grant leads described how participation in the programme would not have been possible without the grant to pay for class cover, time away from roles and other staff time for mentoring activities. To ensure good participation levels in any future cohorts, this grant should remain.

7.3.2 Colleges and training providers
- **Continue to support staff to attend the mentor training programme:** organisational support is vital for mentors to participate in the training programme and for mentors and mentees to have time for the mentoring activities. The 'flipped learning' model requires time for preparation from the mentors to ensure that they have done the required work prior to each module, so that they can get the most from the sessions. Staff should continue to be supported using grant funding to allow time and space for the mentoring activities including financial reimbursement for additional hours.
- **Continue to support mentors and coordinators to identify mentees to receive mentorship:** mentorship has been shown to have positive impacts on staff (mentors and mentees) and perceived positive impacts on students. To allow this to continue mentors should be supported to identify the most suitable people to mentee using a developmental model and not a judgemental model focussed on addressing poor performance.
- **Ensure that staff that attend the training are well-supported:** mentors have been required to carry out activities in addition to attendance at training sessions (reading, planning, reflective logs and mentoring practice) and grant leads are required to monitor activities and provide support. Mentors also valued the time to learn from other mentors as part of a Community of Practice. For the training programme to continue to be a success, mentors and grant leads need this time recognised as integral to participation in the programme.

7.3.3 The delivery partner
- **The recruitment process should be adjusted to ensure better checking of the suitability of candidates for the particular programme they were applying for:** as with the

recommendation for the ETF, clear eligibility requirements, programme information and application forms will help to ensure that mentors can attend a programme that best suits their experience, knowledge, and qualification levels.

- **Plan and communicate in advance the timetables for the training programme modules:** college timetables are established a long-time in advance and so potential participants needed adequate advance notice about which sessions they would be timetabled to for the training programme. Timetable remission and organisation of cover takes time to establish, and more advance notice would help remove this barrier.

- **Improve the communication about the flipped learning model, self-guided learning hours and reading requirements:** an unexpected barrier for some mentors were the hours of pre-reading and preparation needed for each module of learning. Clear communications prior to applying for the programme, as well as time for providers to digest the information and seek clarification, would allow mentors to make informed decisions about the workloads they would be taking on. Training communication should include being specific and clear about which reading materials are required and which would be for 'stretch'. Finally, communication to people on waiting lists who are then invited to participate could be improved with explanations given for late invitations.

- **Consider how the online platform is used for storage, interaction, and delivery:** to support the consolidation of learning and on-going access to the portfolio of training materials and logs, the delivery partner should consider how to organise the online space to allow for this approach. Consideration should also be given to how to strengthen and facilitate online communities of practices outside of online group training sessions as this element of delivery was weaker.

- **Continue to consider the most effective clustering of providers, with particular attention to ensure that smaller private and voluntary and community sector providers have the opportunity to network with similar organisations.**

APPENDIX A THE MENTOR SURVEY

Survey

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our survey about the mentor training programme. This research has been commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) on behalf of the Department for Education to learn more about:

− Mentors' experiences of taking part in the training programme
− The impact of the training on knowledge, confidence and mentoring practice
− The perceived impact on mentees

The research findings will be used to form recommendations that will help support the future development of the mentor training programme. The survey will touch on each of these topics and should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. It will be open until Friday 29 January 2021.

All answers are entirely confidential. By participating in the survey, you consent to IES holding your survey data. Your survey data is anonymous, you will not be asked for your name or email. This data will be held securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR and only accessed by the research team at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES).

Neither your employer, colleagues in your organisation or the ETF will not see your individual responses. All data will be destroyed six months after the research has been completed: the expected date for data deletion is September 2021. The information will be used for research purposes only. Further details about how data is used in this research can be found in the privacy notice.

[please tick] I have read and understood the privacy and data processing terms for this evaluation, and I consent to taking part.*

If you have any questions about the survey or the evaluation, you can contact Joy Williams (joy.williams@employment-studies.co.uk) at IES.

Navigation

Please navigate through this survey using the buttons at the bottom of each page.

If you need to change a previous question or look a page or two ahead, you can use the **Back** and **Next** buttons at the bottom of the page to navigate through the survey.

Reset: use the reset button at the bottom of each page if necessary to reset the answers to that page.

Submit: send your completed questionnaire to us using the Submit button on the last page.

Hovering over these [] symbols will display some explanatory text. If you don't feel able to answer any of the questions, please feel free to leave them blank.

A small number of questions are mandatory as your responses will determine subsequent questions in the survey; these will be denoted with a * symbol.

Background

Which mentor training programme are you participating in:*

> Programme B – New to mentoring

Programme C – Advanced mentoring

Roughly how many years of experience of mentoring colleagues did you have prior to joining the mentor training programme?

Less than 1 year

1-2 years

3-4 years

4-6 years

6+ years

Have you previously taken part in a mentoring training or education course?

Yes

No

What training have you previously received?

[open text]

Are other people in your organisation also taking part in the mentor training programme?

Yes

No

How were you allocated to your mentee(s)?

I was allocated by a mentoring coordinator

I was allocated formally by my institution (not a mentoring coordinator)

My mentee selected me from a pool of mentors established by my institution

My mentee selected me on an informal basis

I selected my mentee on an informal basis

Don't know

Other

Please specify:

[open text]

Do you share the subject / vocational specialism (or work in the same department) of your mentee(s)?

Yes, with all the people I mentor

Yes, with the majority of the people I mentor

Yes, with some of the people I mentor

No

Are you also your mentee's line manager and/or do you have any involvement in the formal

evaluation of your mentee's performance?*

Yes, for all the people I mentor

Yes, for some of the people I mentor

No

The support you have in your organisation

The following questions are about the support that is provided for mentoring within your organisation:

Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My organisation is committed to mentoring						
My organisation values the role of mentors						
Senior leaders in my organisation are supportive of my participation in the mentor training programme						
My organisation provides the time I need to be able to participate effectively in the training programme						
My organisation provides the time I need to put my learning into practice and meet with my mentee(s)						
There are opportunities for me to network with other mentors within my organisation						
My organisation facilitates a professional learning community for mentors						
There are appropriate spaces (online or in person) in my organisation for meeting with my mentee(s), taking into account Covid-19 protocols						
My organisation can support me						

	in implementing systematic changes to the current mentoring approach						

Is there anything more your organisation could do to better support your involvement in the mentor training programme?

[open text]

Experience of the mentor training programme
We appreciate that you are part way through the training and may not have had a chance to participate in all of the modules, but we would like to understand what you think of your experience on the mentoring programme so far.

Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand the aims and objectives of the mentor training programme					
I have found the modules I have participated in so far useful					
I have found the opportunity to practice using mentoring tools in the sessions useful					
I have found the Action Learning Sets useful [Structured sessions which enable small groups to address challenging and complex issues, by meeting on a regular basis and working together to explore and resolve the issue. In the mentor training you will undertake these with other trainees.]					
I have found the 1-1 sessions with a programme trainer useful					
I have found the resources (videos, handouts, reading material etc) that have been shared helpful					
I have actively participated in sessions					
I have actively engaged and collaborated with other mentors in my cohort/study group					
The trainers have relevant knowledge					

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
and experience					
The mentor training I am receiving is relevant to the issues and context of my organisation					
I would recommend the mentor training programme to others wanting to develop their mentoring skills					

Do you have any suggestions for how the programme could be improved?

[open text]

What do you think are the best features of the programme?

[open text]

What have you learnt as part of the mentor training programme?
The following questions are about your views on the extent to which the training has led to improvements in your confidence, knowledge and understanding of mentoring.

Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements.

Taking part in the mentor training programme has:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Improved my understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a mentor					
Improved my confidence in being an effective mentor					
Improved my knowledge of how to set up an appropriate mentoring contract or agreement					
Improved my knowledge of how to structure mentoring meetings					
Improved my knowledge of different mentoring strategies					
Improved my understanding of when it is helpful to challenge mentees					
Improved my knowledge of how to provide support to improve my mentee's emotional resilience					
Improved my knowledge of questioning techniques and listening skills					

Improved my ability to self-reflect on my practice					
Improved my understanding of how to give and receive feedback					
Improved my knowledge of how to support mentees to set effective goals					
Improved my understanding of how I learn and develop and the impact of this on my mentoring					

Taking part in the mentoring skills training programme has:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Improved my understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a mentor					
Improved my confidence in being an effective mentor					
Improved my confidence in participating in Action Learning Sets with my colleagues					
Improved my understanding of how to set up a mentoring programme or enhance an existing mentoring programme in my organisation					
Improved my understanding of how to manage a mentoring programme in my organisation					
Improved my knowledge of different mentoring strategies					
Improved my understanding of when it is helpful to challenge mentees					
Improved my knowledge of how to provide support to improve my mentee's emotional resilience					
Improved my knowledge of questioning techniques and listening skills					
Improved my ability to self-reflect on my					

practice					
Improved my understanding of how to give and receive feedback					
Improved my knowledge of how to support mentees to set effective goals					
Improved my understanding of the role of peer supervision					
Improved my understanding of the role of mentoring supervision for mentors					
Improved my knowledge of how to evaluate a mentoring programme					

Mentoring practice

The following questions are about your views on the extent to which you have applied the knowledge gained from the training to your mentoring practice.

We appreciate that you are part way through the training and may not have had a chance to apply each of these elements.

Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please indicate how much progress you are making in applying your knowledge from the training in the following ways:

	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet	Unlikely to achieve	Not applicable
I am committed to developing and refining my mentoring practice						
I have established a mentoring programme in my organisation or enhancing an existing programme in my organisation						
I have established a mentoring relationship with mentees underpinned by appropriate contracting arrangements						
I have used better questioning and listening techniques than previously						
I have more effectively						

tailored my mentoring to my mentee's individual needs						
I have made changes to the ways I give feedback to mentees						
I have used new ideas and approaches to mentoring						
I have provided more effective support to improve my mentee's workplace resilience						
I have engaged in more self-reflective activities than previously						
I have reflected on the impact of my mentoring on mentees more effectively than previously						

As a result of the mentor training:

	Achieving	Making good progress	Made some progress	Not started yet	Unlikely to achieve	Not applicable
I have managed the mentoring programme in my organisation more effectively than previously						
I have implemented Action Learning Sets more effectively than previously						
I have established more effective peer supervision than previously						
I have evaluated the mentoring programme in my organisation more effectively than previously						

Mentoring practice
The following questions are about how you run your mentoring sessions.

We realise that you may have more than one mentee and your practice may be different for different mentees. If possible, please think broadly about your practice in general across all of the people you mentor.

How many people have been you mentoring since beginning of the mentor training programme?

[open text]

Approximately how often do you meet with your mentee(s)?

Daily

Once every 2-3 days

Approximately once a week

Approximately once a fortnight

Approximately once a month

Less than once a month

Never

Approximately how much time per week do you allocate to supporting your mentee(s)?

Less than one hour

1 – 2 hours

More than 2 hours – 3 hours

More than 3 hours – 4hours

More than 4 hours

Do you think this frequency of meetings is sufficient?

Yes

No

Don't know

Has the programme impacted on the way you prepare for mentoring meetings?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please specify:

[open text]

What is covered in mentoring discussions with mentees? Please select all that apply:

General pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies

Any difficulties the mentee is experiencing in the organisation

Weaknesses in the mentee's performance and how to tackle these

Observing my mentee teaching and providing constructive criticism

Strengths in the mentees' performance

Subject/vocational pedagogy

Emotional wellbeing

The mentee's career progression

How the mentee can develop their skills of critical self-reflection

Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment

Helping them to develop their approach to lesson planning

Helping them to develop their subject/vocational knowledge

Other

Please specify:

[open text]

Impacts

What do you think are the impacts on your mentee(s) resulting from your participation in the mentor training programme? Please select all that apply:

Improved ability to critically reflect on teaching practice

Improved knowledge of subject-specific and general pedagogy

Improved subject/vocational knowledge

Improved communication skills

Improved workload management skills

Improved teaching, learning and assessment practices

Increased sense of autonomy and self-efficacy

Improved resilience, well-being and work-life balance

About you

We would like to capture some information about you to help us understand who has responded to this survey.

How many years have you been teaching? Please specify in full years

0 (I have not completed my first year of teaching)

1 (I am presently undertaking my second year of teaching)

2-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21+

What type of employment do you have:

Permanent work (Full time)

Permanent work (Part time)

Fixed term contract (Longer than 6 months)

Fixed term contract (Less than 6 months)

Casual work (Including agency work)

Zero hours contract

Self employed

What is the highest teaching qualification you hold?

Level 7 (e.g. Postgraduate Certificate in Education)

Level 6 (e.g. BEd/BA/BSc with qualified teacher status (QTS))

Level 5 (e.g. Diploma in Education and Training)

Level 4 (e.g. Certificate in Education and Training)

Level 3 (e.g. Award in Education and Training)

No formal qualifications

Other

What is the main subject you teach? Please choose the most appropriate category.

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Arts, media and publishing

Business, administration and law

Community development

Construction, planning and the built environment

Education and Training (including initial teacher education)

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

English (including literacy)

Family learning

Health, public services and care

Humanities

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Languages, literature and culture

Leisure, travel and tourism

Mathematics

Preparation for life and work

Retail and commercial enterprise

Science

Social Sciences

Other

Please specify:

[open text]

And finally...
Is there anything else you would like to add?

[open text]

Follow-up research
Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow up research interview?

This would last 30-45 minutes and take place by telephone or video call, depending on your preference. [This information will be separated from survey responses and will only be used to contact individuals who volunteer to take part in the follow up interviews.]

Yes

No

Please provide the email address and telephone number that you would prefer us to contact you on.

Email address:

Telephone number:

Thank you
Thank you for taking time to complete the survey.

Please click Submit to send your responses.

Graph 21 Extent to which taking part in the mentor training programme for new mentors has increased confidence, knowledge and understanding

■ Strongly agree   **■ Agree**
■ Neither agree or disagree   **■ Disagree**
■ Strongly disagree

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree
Improved my understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a mentor	58%	41%	2%	
Improved my confidence in being an effective mentor	48%	47%	5%	
Improved my knowledge of how to set up an appropriate mentoring contract or agreement	41%	50%	9%	
Improved my knowledge of how to structure mentoring meetings	41%	53%	6%	
Improved my knowledge of different mentoring strategies	58%	42%		
Improved my understanding of when it is helpful to challenge mentees	38%	52%	9%	2%
Improved my knowledge of how to provide support to improve my mentees emotional resilience	32%	64%	3%	2%
Improved my knowledge of questioning techniques and listening skills	58%	38%	5%	
Improved my ability to self-reflect on my practice	48%	42%	8%	3%
Improved my understanding of how to give and receive feedback	33%	55%	9%	3%
Improved my knowledge of how to support mentees to set effective goals	41%	53%	5%	2%
Improved my understanding of how I learn and develop and the impact of this on my mentoring	38%	53%	8%	2%

Source: Survey of mentors. Base=65-66 (these are variable due to a small number of participants choosing not to respond to some statements).

Graph 22 Extent to which taking part in the mentor training programme for experienced mentors has increased confidence, knowledge, and understanding

Legend:
- ■ Strongly agree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Neither agree nor disagree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Strongly disagree

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Improved my understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a mentor	54%	33%	12%	1%
Improved my confidence in being an effective mentor	42%	37%	16%	4%
Improved my confidence in participating in Action Learning Sets with my colleagues	30%	37%	30%	3%
Improved my understanding of how to set up a mentoring programme or enhance an existing mentoring programme	45%	46%	6%	3%
Improved my understanding of how to manage a mentoring programme in my organisation	42%	42%	12%	4%
Improved my knowledge of different mentoring strategies	51%	46%	3%	
Improved my understanding of when it is helpful to challenge mentees	37%	45%	16%	1%
Improved my knowledge of how to provide support to improve my mentees emotional resilience	37%	46%	15%	1%
Improved my knowledge of questioning techniques and listening skills	40%	37%	19%	3%
Improved my ability to self-reflect on my practice	40%	43%	15%	1%
Improved my understanding of how to give and receive feedback	36%	43%	16%	4%
Improved my knowledge of how to support mentees to set effective goals	32%	48%	18%	2%
Improved my understanding of the role of peer supervision	48%	45%	6%	1%
Improved my understanding of the role of mentoring supervision for mentors	52%	44%	3%	2%
Improved my knowledge of how to evaluate a mentoring programme	39%	46%	12%	3%

Source: Survey of mentors. Base=66-67 (these are variable due to a small number of participants choosing not to respond to some statements).

Graph 23 Approach to matching - by programme type

Legend:
- ■ Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=67)
- ■ Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=68)

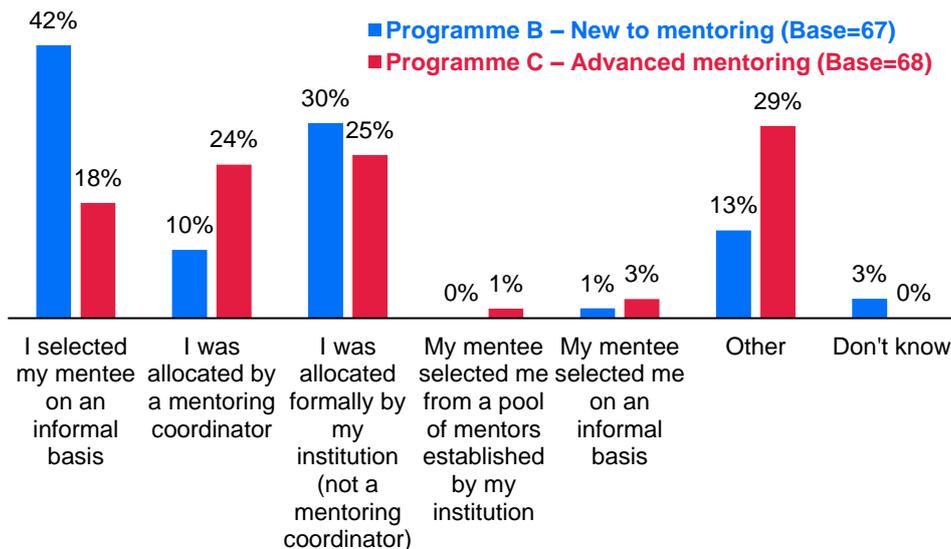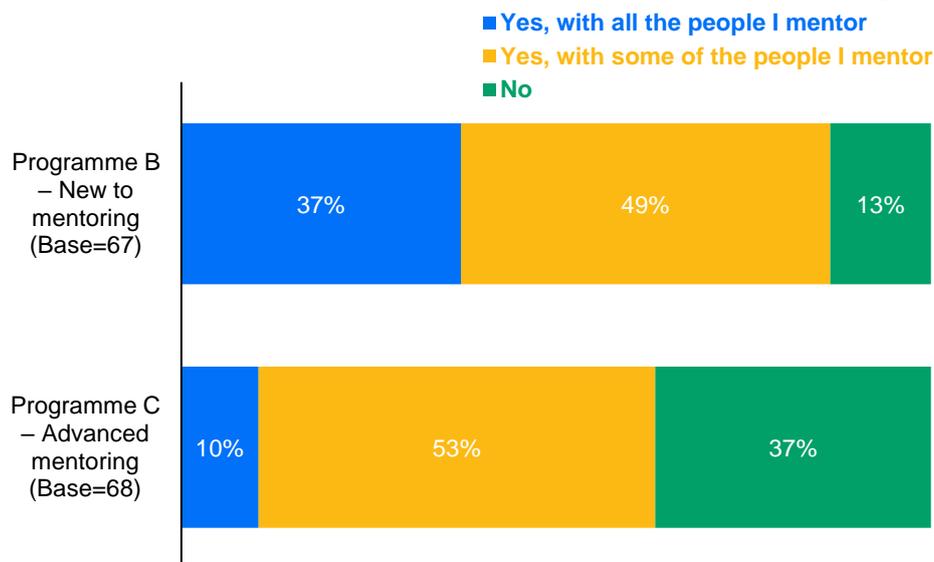| Category	Programme B	Programme C
I selected my mentee on an informal basis	42%	18%
I was allocated by a mentoring coordinator	10%	24%
I was allocated formally by my institution (not a mentoring coordinator)	30%	25%
My mentee selected me from a pool of mentors established by my institution	0%	1%
My mentee selected me on an informal basis	1%	3%
Other	13%	29%
Don't know	3%	0%

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Graph 24 Whether specialisms shared with mentees - by programme type

Legend:
- ■ Yes, with all the people I mentor
- ■ Yes, with some of the people I mentor
- ■ No

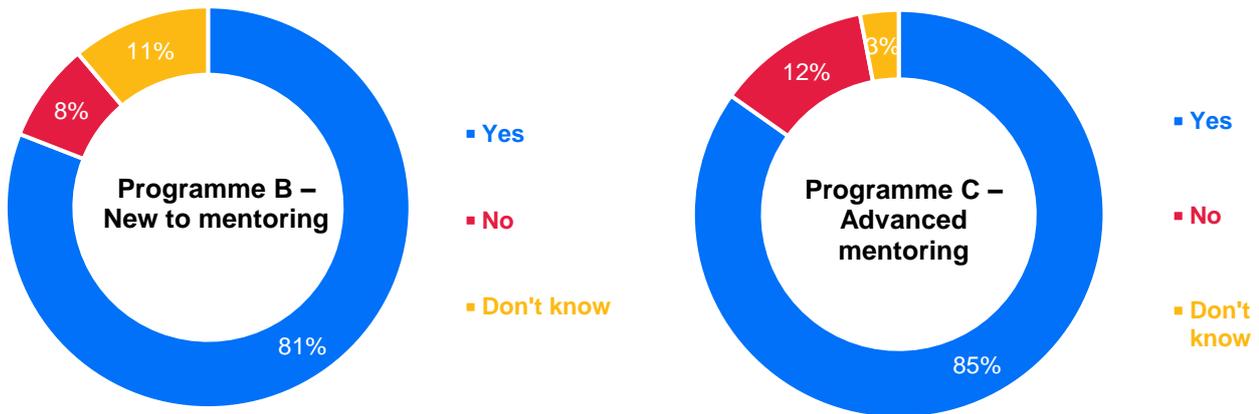| Programme	Yes, with all	Yes, with some	No
Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=67)	37%	49%	13%
Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=68)	10%	53%	37%

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Graph 25 Frequency of meetings with mentee - by programme type

- ■ Approximately once a fortnight
- ■ Approximately once a week
- ■ Less than once a month
- ■ Approximately once a month
- ■ Daily
- ■ Once every 2-3 days

Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=65): 28% | 11% | 46% | 2% | 14%

Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=67): 36% | 12% | 40% | 6% | 6%
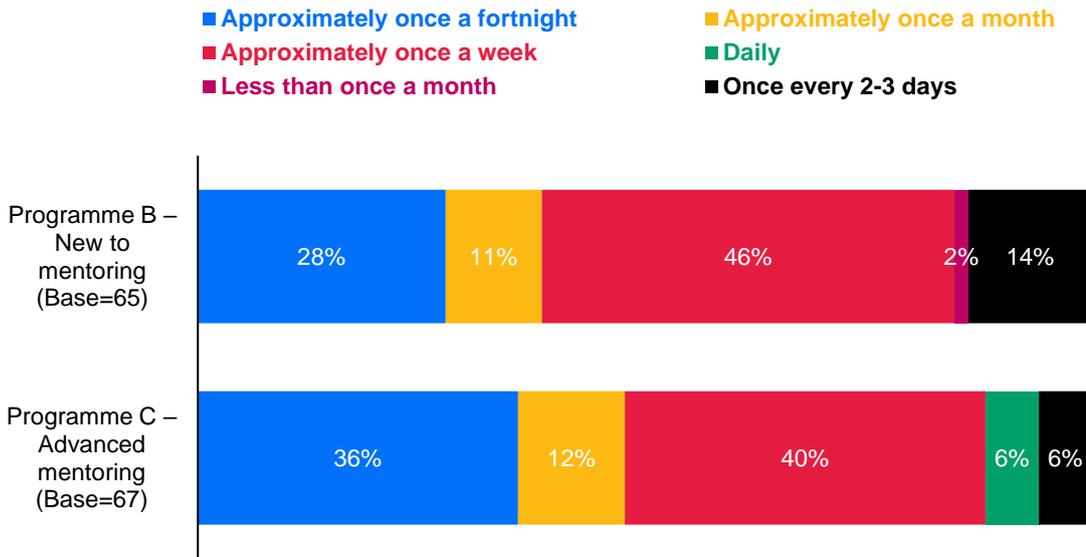
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Graph 26 Does mentee think frequency of meetings is sufficient - by programme type
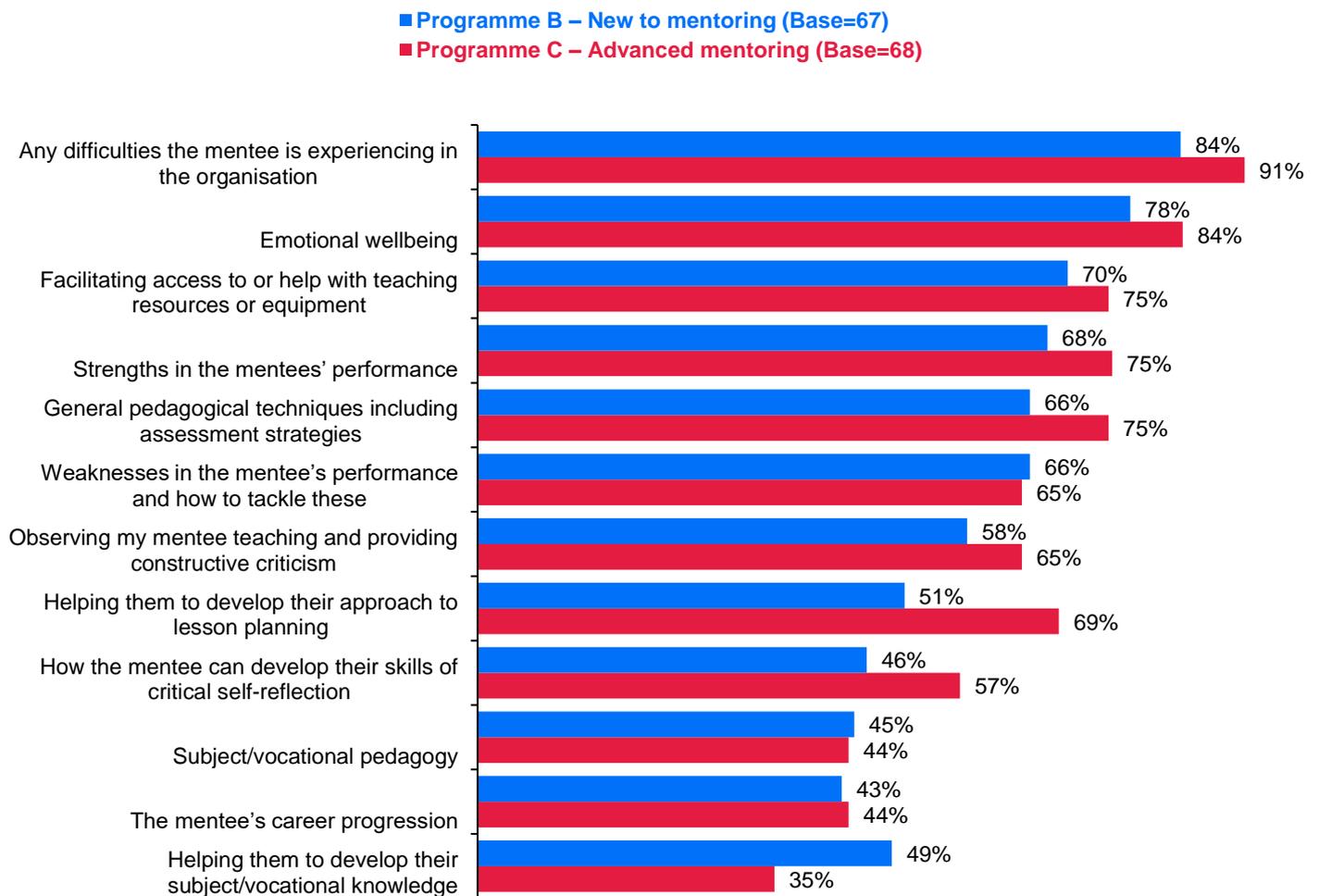
Programme B – New to mentoring
- 11%
- 8%
- 81%

■ Yes
■ No
■ Don't know

Source: Survey of mentors. Base=63

Programme C – Advanced mentoring
- 3%
- 12%
- 85%

■ Yes
■ No
■ Don't know

Source: Survey of mentors. Base=66

Graph 27 Weekly time allocated to supporting mentee - by programme type

Legend:
- ■ Less than one hour
- ■ 1 – 2 hours
- ■ More than 2 hours – 3 hours
- ■ More than 3 hours – 4hours
- ■ More than 4 hours

Programme	Less than one hour	1 – 2 hours	More than 2 hours – 3 hours	More than 3 hours – 4 hours	More than 4 hours
Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=65)	5%	49%	31%	5%	11%
Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=66)	14%	45%	17%	11%	14%
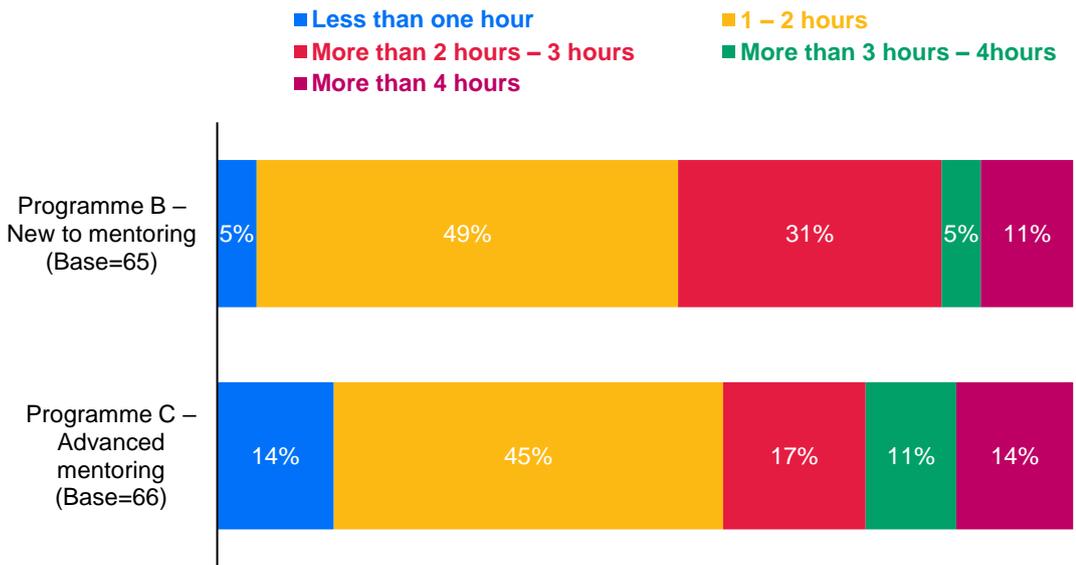
Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

Graph 28 What is covered in mentoring sessions - by programme type

- ■ Programme B – New to mentoring (Base=67)
- ■ Programme C – Advanced mentoring (Base=68)

	Programme B	Programme C
Any difficulties the mentee is experiencing in the organisation	84%	91%
Emotional wellbeing	78%	84%
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	70%	75%
Strengths in the mentees' performance	68%	75%
General pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	66%	75%
Weaknesses in the mentee's performance and how to tackle these	66%	65%
Observing my mentee teaching and providing constructive criticism	58%	65%
Helping them to develop their approach to lesson planning	51%	69%
How the mentee can develop their skills of critical self-reflection	46%	57%
Subject/vocational pedagogy	45%	44%
The mentee's career progression	43%	44%
Helping them to develop their subject/vocational knowledge	49%	35%

Source: Survey of mentors. Bases shown in graph.

APPENDIX B CASE STUDIES

Specialist College – C: Advanced Skills for experienced mentors
Organisational context
The specialist college does not have a formal mentoring programme in place apart from the allocation of subject-specific mentors to trainee teachers. Mentoring for non-trainee staff is relatively informal, with no specific remission or payment for mentoring roles. There is a Teaching and Learning team within the college, which supports the continuing professional development of staff, primarily through observation and feedback. Prior to the mentor training programme, the college had recently moved to a more developmental observational approach from a more judgemental approach, and as part of this is now using non-graded observations.

Reasons for taking part
One Teaching and Learning Coach from the college took part in Programme C for advanced mentors. She was attracted to the programme because she is enthusiastic about the mentoring component of her role and motivated to develop her practice and support teachers' development. She also wanted to support the recent organisational shift to a more developmental approach to mentoring and observation. Her manager and the grant lead were both supportive because they were keen for a more structured approach to mentoring across the organisation and could see there was a good fit between the training and the roles and responsibilities of Teaching and Learning Coaches. The mentor had previously taken part in CPD for Advanced Practitioners and the college felt that the ETF training built on learning from this CPD.

Experiences of the training
The mentor found the programme accessible and useful. The online mode has made it easy to fit in and the ETF grant was used by the college to provide remission and cover, which has enabled participation in all the sessions: "*If it hadn't been for the fact I was able to get cover for my own teaching, I don't think it would have been feasible at all.*" The grant lead agreed that the funded remission time has helped the mentor to "*fully engage with the programme and give it her full attention*". They felt it would be much harder without the grant.

Training outcomes
The mentor has found that learning from the programme has helped her to be more confident in her role and that her professional practice has developed as a result of taking part in the training. She has learned about new mentoring frameworks and theories and also learned more detail about approaches she was already familiar with. She uses these routinely in her mentoring. She generally feels she has greater understanding of what she is delivering and why and greater ability to measure if the approach she is taking is working, and this was observed by the grant lead also. The mentor has also very recently (beginning of 2021) started to formalise mentoring across the college more widely. She feels the training has equipped her with the knowledge she needs to set up a mentoring programme and has started to use some of the techniques and processes discussed in the training. She has started to train 6-7 teachers within the college. The grant lead was positive about this work. He commented that the mentor has gained lots of new ideas and thinking from the programme which is shaping the training. The grant lead partly attributed this to the opportunity to develop professional networks beyond the college, which has provided a rich and broad perspective. Both the mentor and grant lead expressed intent to continue rolling out their mentoring programme beyond the end of the training.

The mentor felt that her mentees were benefitting from the training in that they "*they now have more tools to use for different approaches to teaching*". Two mentees supported by the mentor described receiving support around a wide range of issues including behaviour management, teaching people

with mental health issues and workload and time constraints. They felt confident about being able to raise personal or professional issues they were experiencing with their mentor. They reported that the one-to-one mentoring sessions were flexible and one mentee emphasised how their mentor encouraged greater reflection in their teaching practice, which she has been focussing on. One mentee reported greater confidence in their teaching since they started taking part in mentoring. In particular, they mentioned the mentoring has helped them change their approach to behavioural management to be more of a coaching approach and less negative. They think this has helped with student attendance levels.

General FE college – B: Mentoring skills for new mentors,
Organisational context
This large FE college is based across four sites. There is currently no formal mentoring programme within the college. Historically, a team of five learning and development coaches have provided coaching and mentoring support but this has primarily been focussed on managing weak performance. There has recently been a strategic shift, with a move towards a greater emphasis on mentoring and having more staff trained to support one another. As part of this, graded observations, which would previously have triggered the involvement of the learning and development team if there were concerns, have ceased. The college has not previously offered any mentor training

Reasons for taking part
Four members of staff took part in Programme B. The mentor interviewed had wanted formal mentor training for many years so was really pleased to see the opportunity offered by ETF. He saw it as an important professional development opportunity and asked their line manager if he could take part. The grant lead agreed there were benefits for the four individuals taking part – they are all experienced mentors who want to improve and refine their skills and the training provides a good opportunity for this. The college believes in professional development so he was happy to support the application.

Experiences of the training
The mentor found the online mode of the training useful. He acknowledged that it is hard to compare face to face and online training but overall "*doing it online has been really convenient and I suspect that my attendance has been better because of it."*.

He has particularly enjoyed being part of a Community of Practice and has found feedback from peers in his group useful and constructive. He has found tutors really knowledgeable and valued the support they have given. He emphasised that the course offers "*a very safe place to work […] it's a comfortable experience, I don't feel judged".* Overall the training has been intensive and is a significant time commitment but has been very rewarding too.

Training outcomes
The mentor feels he has developed new mentoring skills and gained new knowledge, and is pleased to see that his mentees seem to be enjoying the mentoring experience. He believes they are benefitting from a space where they are listened to and that over the longer term this will bring wider benefits in relation to the skills of mentees. The grant lead noted that at the end of the training they will assess the learning and perceived impact of the training and may use this to re-shape mentoring.

Voluntary and community sector provider - B: Mentoring skills for new mentors
Organisational context
The provider is a small community interest company that delivers capacity building, training and support to a range of voluntary and community sector organisations. It is also in receipt of European

Social Fund funding to deliver employment and skills training for unemployed people and to support them into work. They have many tutors on part-time contracts, who typically also work in other FE and HE institutions.

Reasons for taking part

The CEO of the organisation saw the training opportunity advertised in an ETF bulletin and was keen to take it up because the organisation only carried out mentoring informally at that time and he had not received any previous training on mentoring. He wanted to establish a more formal and structured process around mentoring. He discussed the opportunities with one of the directors in the company and subsequently applied for a place for himself on Programme B for new mentors. The grant was a strong incentive for participation and has been used to pay for some additional hours for mentees to allow them to participate in mentoring sessions: "*We had to have this funding otherwise we couldn't have paid them as well, we just couldn't have done it*". The grant has also been used to pay for some of the mentor's time.

Experiences of the training

As the organisation is small, the mentor's mentees were within his line management chain. However, he drew on learning from the training to establish mentoring contracts at the outset, which clearly stated that the mentoring was peer-to-peer, confidential and entirely separate from line management interactions. An example mentor agreement was provided as part of the course, and he tailored this to his context.

The mentor found the training required a significant time commitment. He found the resources provided useful and is sure they will serve as a useful reference in future as well. For him, the most useful aspect has been being provided with a range of mentoring theories and frameworks to use in his practice. He valued the one-to-one support from a dedicated tutor, which he used to talk through particular mentoring challenges he has with a mentee. This tailored support was "*really good, it just reassured me really beforehand.*" He has really enjoyed the mentoring he has delivered within his organisation as part of the course: "*To be able to set aside 10 hours to provide mentoring for each person has just been a real joy, and the people who have been mentored have also come back and said they've got such a lot out of it too. So it's really been quite rewarding.*". The grant lead has observed the mentor's positive engagement with the training too: "*It has given him the opportunity to move away from the daily tasks and the doom and gloom that's happening at the moment and develop himself… That has boosted his confidence and given him something to focus on and that has been very positive.*"

Training outcomes

The mentor is using mentoring models and approaches that he learned about in the training in his mentoring. He also takes a structured approach to mentoring, with clear records of discussions and regular review. The grant lead has received positive feedback from mentees and also observed improvements to team working, which he attributes to the training. "*The way the conversations are flowing is different, people seem more positive and more confident, it's changed the dynamics, people feel more at ease, that they can talk more openly and express themselves better, it's been great […] the general feeling I get is that they listen more and they speak less. That's one thing I noticed during the meeting, being a bit more considerate towards others, it's very good*".

Mentoring is in its infancy in the organisation and the new approach introduced as a result of the training represents a significant shift: "*The mentoring we were doing in the past was more about affirmation and reassurance to Trustees and CEOs of Charities... But we haven't done it in this way*". One of the legacies of the training is that the provider is appointing an external training company to facilitate Communities of Practice.

FE College – C: Advanced Skills for experienced mentors

Organisational context

This college is smaller than average and offers HE provision as well as FE provision. Some months before the mentor training began, the college introduced significant changes to its existing mentoring programme. There has been a move from graded observations carried out by a member of the Teaching and Learning Coaches (TLC) team to non-graded teaching triangles, which include a TLC and one other member of staff, as well as the teacher or tutor being observed. TLCs work within their subject-specialism or closely related subjects. Teaching triangles are intended to be developmental and supportive. All mentoring in the college takes place outside of line management structures and is primarily focussed on new teachers in their first year and anyone identified as needing extra support, but with an 'open door policy' for other teachers who want support.

Reasons for taking part

Two of the college's four TLCs are taking part in the programme for experienced mentors (Programme C). The mentor interviewed had not undertaken any mentoring-related CPD since 2009 and so saw the course as an opportunity to upskill and reflect on her mentoring. She and her colleagues had started to identify areas of the existing mentoring programme that needed improvements (e.g. increased structure) and she felt the training would add credibility and validity to their suggestions for change. The grant lead was supportive and was keen to invest in the training to support their teaching triangles work and mentoring more generally.

Experiences of the training

Her favourite component of the training was the weekly Zoom sessions as she enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with peers from other organisations.

Training outcomes

The mentor has applied learning from the training to improve the mentor training programme. For example, she and her colleagues now use the Oscar tool to measure the 'distance travelled' by mentees. They are also in the process of introducing mentoring agreements to introduce greater consistency, formality, and responsibility around mentoring. The two participating mentors share the knowledge and learning from the training with the two other TLCs in their weekly team meetings.

The grant lead noticed that the mentors have become more confident in their approach to mentoring. They are also taking a more structured approach and meeting with mentees more frequently than previously. The grant lead also commented that benefits were starting to emerge for mentees and gave the example of a newly qualified teacher who had previously been struggling with online teaching. The grant lead noted that since the mentoring support has been in place, the new teacher has improved and "*the students think he is great".* She felt the mentoring was making a real difference.

Knowledge about effective mentoring has also been shared beyond the TLCs and is perceived by the grant lead to be making a difference. The grant lead gave an example of a member of staff who participated in a teaching triangle listening to the mentor feedback from the session and subsequently improving the way she writes up and gives feedback from teaching triangles. In addition, the college is part of a wider group of colleges, some of which have been keen to learn from them about how mentoring could be used in their own colleges. For example, one of the other colleges now attends their weekly quality meetings where mentoring and teaching triangles are reviewed and so is gaining indirect learning from the training, as well as other knowledge.

The mentee interviewed valued the mentoring support she received: "*Why I enjoy them so much is because I can just approach her and talk to her honestly about things that I am a bit worried about*

[…] it made me feel so much more at ease. It's a support system, you don't feel like you're bothering anyone... It's something I'm definitely very thankful for". In particular, she feels she has a better understanding of how to support her team as a result of the mentoring. A specific action resulting from her mentoring, has been developing a new approach to online assessment on her course: "*Being able to work together to come up with that idea, it enabled me to develop, thinking about things for myself whilst having that support there... I think it does a lot for your confidence too.*"

FE college – C: Advanced Skills for experienced mentors

Organisational context

The college's existing mentoring programme is focussed on new teachers and teachers where there are concerns about performance. The college is organised into directorates, which cover multiple subject and vocational areas. Each directorate has a Teaching and Learning Manager, responsible for the quality of teaching, with mentors in their directorate supporting their work. Mentees are typically not mentored by their line manager. The grant lead, a senior leader in the college, noted that the college has recently removed a formal graded observation process, which was carried out by mentors. He explained, "*We've been doing some work over the last couple of years with staff to take them away from that judge and jury - which was how they were being seen, into a truly supportive pedagogical friend, where staff could go without fear of it affecting their performance grade or pay.*" This academic year they are trialling Teaching Innovation Groups, which mentors support, which are intended to help staff identify ways to improve teaching and learning.

Reasons for taking part

Given these recent developments in the college, the grant leads offered the training to all of the Teaching and Learning Managers in the college. Three staff from the college are taking part in the training, one on the advanced programme and two on the new to mentoring programme. The mentor interviewed was attracted to the programme because she wanted to do some additional learning to build on the Level 7 qualification in coaching and mentoring she did a couple of years previously.

Experiences of the training

The mentor has found the training to be pitched appropriately, taking account of her substantial existing knowledge and experience. She would recommend it and emphasised: "*I've really enjoyed it, I haven't got anything bad to say, I think it's been really good.*" She has been able to use the resources in a way that meets her needs, focussing on areas she is less familiar with and spending less time on areas she already had a good understanding of.

Training outcomes

The training equipped the mentor with new techniques, tools and models, which she has found helpful and now uses in her mentoring. She also commented that she has developed her active listening skills and reflective practice: "*It's made me far more aware that it's the listening that's the most important part, and from there the actions. I think I'm already quite reflective, but it's about reflecting on everything that you do and the impact of it".* In terms of future developments, she hopes to introduce group mentoring and also formal supervision for mentors. She will also be working with the grant lead on digital skills and staff wellbeing and intends to use her advanced mentoring skills to help her undertake that work more effectively.

She has developed a draft business plan for mentoring as part of the training and has identified areas for expansion, development and improvement. This includes more clarity on roles and responsibilities, including differentiation between a line manager and mentor's role, and an improved process for selecting mentors. As part of the process of developing this business plan, she noted that she has engaged more with colleagues and managers within the college. She attributes this to

feeling more confident about speaking up about areas that require improvement.

The grant lead commented that he has noticed increased confidence among the three participating mentors. He believes the college is also starting to see more permanent improvements to performance among mentees, as a result of the changes the college has made, supported by the training:

> "*That's coming back from the staff which they mentor, we don't have as many recurring issues with the staff which we used to have… We used to call them 'rubber band teachers', we'd put a lot of support in, we'd get them where we wanted them to be, we'd take the support away and they'd quickly be flagged up again as needing support. We don't find this is the case anymore. Where mentor intervention takes place now, we see it's making more lifelong changes and we don't see the same people coming up for performance management issues […] Because it's asking the staff member to identify what's not working as well, and how to fix it, rather than somebody from the outside saying this is what you need to do... that seems to be an approach that is having much more purchase.*"

The mentee interview echoed this view and described the increased confidence she gains from mentoring: "*It just gives me confidence really. I find with people I've worked with in the past I struggle a bit with confidence but I feel with [mentor] being there, it's allowing me to succeed more in my role. Because she's giving me opportunities and ways of working, that I wouldn't ever have thought of.*" In particular, she feels more able to understand the course she teaches and to break it down and tailor it for different students.

Overall, the grant lead considers that the training has supported their efforts to overhaul mentoring and introduce a developmental approach. It has helped them to be confident that "*what we're doing is right, effective, well evidence and research-based and its improving staff wellbeing which is important in these times.*"

Local Authority ACL provider – B: Mentoring skills for new mentors

Organisational context

Approximately 18 months ago, Ofsted judged the overall effectiveness of this unitary authority's provision as inadequate. Recent monitoring visits have indicated reasonable progress is being made towards improving provision. Quality Officers allocated to different learning areas have a responsibility to improve the quality of teaching and learning through coaching and mentoring of the sessional tutors who are employed to deliver adult and community education courses. There is no formal mentoring programme in place, but Quality Officers are expected to identify staff who need support to improve and to work with them.

Reasons for taking part

Two of the provider's Quality Officers are taking part in the programme for new mentors (Programme B). One of the mentors explained that her reasons for taking part were that as relatively new Quality Officer, who has not received formal mentor training previously, the training appealed. The grant lead also noted that the two Quality Officers are new and thought the training was important to support them in their new role. He also thought the training would enable them to spend more focussed mentoring time with tutors who needed it.

Experiences of the training

The mentor has found the online mode convenient and has reflected that it has been easier to fit in than having to travel to face-to-face sessions. She has found the course reading interesting and looks forward to taking part in group sessions each week. She values discussing and reflecting on her mentoring experiences with FE professionals from other organisations and her group has set up

a WhatsApp group on which they continue discussions about mentoring more informally. She has not experienced any challenges in reaching the minimum requirement of 40 hours mentoring. The provider has been able to use some of the grant to pay sessional tutors for additional hours so they can take part in mentoring, which has been important.

Training outcomes

As a result of the training, the mentor has made mentoring with some of her staff more structured and has changed the format to enable her mentees to find their own solutions to problems, instead of her providing answers. She hopes that this is gradually helping to create a culture of problem-solving in the organisation, although embedding this fully will take time. In the context of Covid, some very experienced tutors who are skilled in the classroom, have struggled to adapt to using IT for remote delivery so in some cases this has been an area of focus in mentoring session. According to the grant lead, this has enabled the provider to increase the number of courses delivered online, which has in turn allowed them to increase learner numbers. More generally, he considered that previously sessional tutors did not feel part of the council and that the mentoring has helped to bring them closer to other members of staff. The mentors and grant leads are currently discussing how learning can be cascaded to other sections of the unitary authority and the grant lead is supporting strategic discussions. Their ambition ultimately is to move from their current position of observation being seen as a punitive, judgemental measure carried out because Ofsted requires it, to a culture of growth and development supported by coaching and mentoring.

Thankyou