



National Offender  
Management Service

# **The Informal Mentoring Project**

## A Process Evaluation

**Avan Wadia and Diana Parkinson**  
M & E Consulting

2015

*The NOMS Commissioning Strategies Group supports effective policy development and operational delivery within the National Offender Management Service and Ministry of Justice by conducting and commissioning high-quality social research and statistical analysis. We aim to publish information to add to the evidence base and assist with informed debate.*

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## **The authors**

M & E Consulting is a small consultancy providing advice, training and support with monitoring and evaluation to organisations in the voluntary and public sectors.

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# 1. Summary

## 1.1 Context

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation define mentoring as “a voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life”.<sup>1</sup>

The Informal Mentoring Project was introduced by NOMS and Clinks<sup>2</sup> with the aim of increasing the support available for offenders leaving prison, helping them to reintegrate into society and move towards desistance from crime. It was envisaged that the Informal Mentoring Project would:

- provide short-term ‘light touch’ mentoring so that offenders could receive one-to-one support following their release from prison and access services in the community<sup>3</sup>
- capacity build existing local organisations to provide mentoring for offenders and
- enable offenders to build supportive, trusting relationships with local community members through using local volunteers (including ex-offenders) as mentors.

Two organisations ran pilot projects, selected for their differing infrastructure models. Catch22, a national charity, worked with local providers to mentor offenders released from HMP Nottingham. Sefton CVS, a local infrastructure organisation, recruited mentors to work with offenders from HMP Liverpool resettling in the Liverpool and Sefton areas.

This report summarises the findings from a process evaluation examining the set-up and implementation of the project. The evaluation ran from March 2011 to November 2012. Although the pilot and evaluation pre-date the Transforming Rehabilitation proposals, the lessons learnt are relevant for understanding the benefits and challenges of undertaking mentoring with offenders, and providing services ‘through the gate’.

The evaluation set out to investigate:

- how each pilot project set up and provided a voluntary mentoring service for offenders leaving prison;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mandbf.org/mbf-membership/what-is-mentoring-and-befriending>

<sup>2</sup> Clinks is a national organisation that supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary and community sector working with offenders.

<sup>3</sup> In this context, informal mentoring is defined by NOMS as mentoring that is “not time bound or outcome focussed, but has a purpose and is relevant to the needs of the offender”.

- what kind of support each project provided to offenders;
- what factors facilitated and hindered delivery of the projects;
- what impact the projects had on the individuals and organisations involved.

## 1.2 Approach

The report is based on an analysis of qualitative data gathered through interviews with offenders (n = 53), mentors (n = 12), project staff and other key stakeholders (n = 51), as well as through an online survey to mentors (n = 67).<sup>4</sup> The evaluation covered the period March 2011 to November 2012. The scope of this evaluation was limited to assessing the process of providing mentoring to male offenders on their release from prison in two specific areas of the country. Therefore the results may not be representative of other mentoring services.

## 1.3 Findings

### Project outcomes

**The projects provided much-needed additional support for offenders, especially those sentenced to fewer than 12 months. The through-the-gate aspect was helpful for continued engagement.** Both projects were well regarded by offenders and prison staff alike.

**Both projects completed relatively small numbers of ‘successful’ mentoring relationships during the evaluation period. Sefton CVS appeared to have a higher number of successful and longer lasting relationships than Catch22.** Success in this instance refers to a minimum of three contacts, and with a mutually agreed ending. Sefton CVS delivered 133 relationships with three or more contacts, with 54 ending positively. Catch22 delivered 59 relationships, with 41 ending positively, rather than ending as a result of disengagement/transfer, mentor attrition, or rearrest.

### Set up and referrals

**Set up took longer than expected as relationships with the prison and wider staff needed time to bed in.** Securing the support of local agencies, including Prison Governors, was crucial. Both projects devoted a great deal of time to developing systems and procedures for recruiting and training volunteers, engaging offenders and sharing information.

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<sup>4</sup> In this report, key stakeholders include offenders, mentors, project staff and all those involved in helping the projects to deliver their services (i.e. prison, probation and police personnel).

**Both projects had many more referrals than they could work with.** Around a fifth of the offenders referred to the projects accessed mentoring support. The projects received referrals for 1,764 offenders<sup>5</sup> between June 2011 and November 2012. This represented around a third of those released from both prisons in the same period. However, many offenders withdrew from the projects either because they decided they no longer wanted or needed a mentor or because they were transferred to other prisons or released sooner than expected. A total of 318 offenders were successfully matched with a mentor/project staff in this evaluation period.

### **Offender profiles and engagement with projects**

**Sixty nine percent of offenders referred to Sefton and 52% of offenders referred to Catch22 were serving sentences of under 12 months.** These offenders often had complex needs that had not yet been addressed by other services. Many had substance misuse issues, accommodation problems and/or lack of support in the community. The recent proposals from the Transforming Rehabilitation Programme to provide statutory support to this group should help address this gap.

**Offenders often wanted help with practical issues rather than general emotional support. In addition, a number of factors appeared to be important in maintaining offenders' engagement:**

- drawing up action plans;
- establishing relationships based on trust and mutual respect;
- working with offenders to shape the pace of the relationship;
- maintaining contact with project staff.

**It was felt that many offenders disengaged because they were not ready to make changes in their lives.** This was reported by a wide range of stakeholders. Of the 289 mentoring relationships completed (or terminated)<sup>6</sup> during the evaluation period, 140 offenders (49%) disengaged at some point.

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<sup>5</sup> Referrals came from either prison staff or the offenders themselves.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the 318 matched offenders had not completed their mentoring at the time of the evaluation conclusion. 192 offenders received three or more contacts (defined as the minimum for this project). 95 of these relationships reached a positive, 'successful' conclusion, where the offender and mentor mutually ended the relationship.

## Mentors

**Training, matching, supporting and retaining mentors was challenging at times, and required additional resources.** Many potential mentors did not have the appropriate skills, experience or availability required. This was especially true when offenders had complex and multiple needs which were beyond the capabilities of the mentors. Whilst data was not kept on reasons why mentors left, it was reported that some were put off by lengthy security checks, whilst others found employment.

**Offenders valued having a peer mentor<sup>7</sup> who understood their situation. Supporting and training these mentors required additional time and resources.** By the end of the projects, over a third of the mentors were peer mentors.

**There were some security issues involved in enabling mentors access to offenders in prison, which impacted on the time taken to establish the service.** Catch22 mentors could only see offenders in the visits area, whilst it took several months for Sefton CVS to get agreement for mentors to enter the prison. However, these issues may differ for other establishments.

## 1.4 Implications

Informal mentoring has the potential to provide support for offenders leaving prison but requires time, commitment, and input from paid trained staff to manage the complex issues involved in supporting offenders to resettle successfully after their release from prison. The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme proposals should help to bridge the gap in service provision, especially for offenders serving under 12 months.

Establishing good working relationships between prisons, providers and other services is essential for the effective set-up and delivery of services, especially in terms of gaining access to offenders and developing procedures for assessing and managing risk. This requires commitment from all parties. Establishing relationships with offenders prior to release is useful to enable continuity of support at a critical time of transition, although in practice this is difficult to ensure. Offenders often disengaged as they were not committed to making changes in their life, and/or due to the chaotic nature of their lives in the community.

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<sup>7</sup> Peer mentors in this report refer to ex-offenders.

Mentoring can be resource intensive. During the pilot a number of mentors and mentees dropped out of the services and input from paid, skilled staff was necessary to support and train mentors, assess offenders, and build and maintain relationships with stakeholders.

## **Good practice elements**

### ***Set-up and implementation***

Ideally, projects should:

- allow four to six months for set-up to ensure they have enough time to recruit appropriate staff, establish relationships with key stakeholders, set up essential systems and procedures and develop a pool of mentors;
- provide strong line management support to project staff;
- recruit volunteer mentors with appropriate skills and experience and the availability to support offenders immediately after their release and allow time and resources for recruiting mentors on an ongoing basis;
- recognise the value of working with ex-offenders as peer mentors but ensure that they select them carefully and provide them with additional training and support;
- build in sufficient resources to enable project staff to set up and support the mentoring relationships as well as carry out other essential tasks such as promoting their services and monitoring their work;
- work closely with other local providers in order to provide a co-ordinated service for offenders;
- agree targets that are realistic, taking account of the complexities of this kind of work and the high levels of offender disengagement to be expected.

### **Supporting offenders**

Ideally, projects should:

- carry out in-depth assessments of offenders (in collaboration with the prison) so that they have a clear understanding of their needs and risks and so that offenders commit to the mentoring;
- co-ordinate support for offenders prior to their release so that volunteer mentors can focus on supporting offenders in accessing services and resettling into the community;
- use action plans so that offenders' immediate needs on release from prison are addressed;
- provide support to offenders around the time of their release from prison as this is when they are most in need;

- work with offenders to set the pace of the relationship and offer support for as long as is required;
- provide support to both offenders and mentors during the mentoring relationships;
- recognise that mentoring is likely to be particularly attractive to offenders serving short sentences whilst not excluding others from accessing it.

## 2. Context

This report sets out the findings of a process evaluation of the Informal Mentoring Project, which was commissioned by NOMS (the National Offender Management Service) and Clinks and was carried out by M & E Consulting.<sup>8</sup> Although the pilot and evaluation pre-date the Transforming Rehabilitation proposals, the lessons learnt are relevant for understanding the benefits and challenges of undertaking mentoring with offenders, and providing services ‘through the gate’.

### 2.1 Mentoring in prisons

The use of mentors to support offenders in prison and after their release is recognised by advocates as a way of encouraging desistance and reducing reoffending. As a result, the number of mentoring schemes has grown rapidly across the UK, with around 300 schemes now offering mentoring or befriending services to offenders. A number of these schemes provide ‘through the gate’ mentoring, which enables offenders to build a relationship with a mentor who can support them through the transition from prison to community.

### 2.2 Evidence base for mentoring offenders

Mentoring has been defined by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation as “a voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life”. Research has shown that mentors can provide the support that many offenders lack in their lives by helping them to access services and by providing positive role models. In addition, research suggests that mentoring:

- is a potentially effective way of helping offenders build new social networks that can support the desistance process (Sapouna *et al.*, 2011);
- can have some positive effects on reoffending, employability and motivation to change (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007).

A recent evidence review of mentoring evaluations (Finnegan *et al.*, 2010) found that evidence to support the efficacy of mentoring is inconclusive. Few mentoring programmes have been robustly evaluated for their effect on reducing re-offending or other outcomes. Of those that have been evaluated, some have demonstrated a positive impact on re-offending, but not all. In addition, it is often difficult to distinguish the effect of mentoring from other interventions individuals receive. The evidence as a whole suggests that mentoring may be

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<sup>8</sup> Clinks is an umbrella organisation supporting VCS organisations working in the criminal justice sector.

most beneficial when it begins in prison and lasts beyond release and is also most likely to be effective when the relationship is maintained over time rather than consisting of just one or two sessions.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.3 The Informal Mentoring Project

The Informal Mentoring Project was introduced by NOMS in order to increase the support available for offenders leaving prison, help them to reintegrate into society and move towards desistance from offending. NOMS and Clinks envisaged that the Informal Mentoring Project would:

- provide short-term, 'light touch' mentoring so that offenders could receive one-to-one support following their release from prison, particularly in accessing services in the community;
- make use of existing community-based mentoring provision, by building the capacity of local organisations to provide mentoring for offenders;
- use volunteers (including ex-offenders) as mentors to enable offenders to build supportive, trusting relationships with members of the local community.

### The pilot projects

Two organisations ran pilot projects, selected for their differing infrastructure models. Sefton CVS, a local infrastructure organisation, was commissioned to run a pilot project in Sefton and Liverpool. Catch22, a national charity with experience of working with offenders and ex-offenders, was commissioned to run a pilot project in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The projects were chosen because of their differing models and locations – the Sefton CVS project was based in the community whereas Catch22's project was based in the prison. The projects were funded by NOMS from March 2011 until April 2013.

### The Sefton CVS project

Sefton CVS was commissioned to provide informal mentoring to offenders on their release from HMP Liverpool.<sup>10</sup> Although the prison receives offenders who are sentenced by courts in the Merseyside area, the Sefton CVS project focused on providing support to offenders due to be released into the Sefton and Liverpool areas.

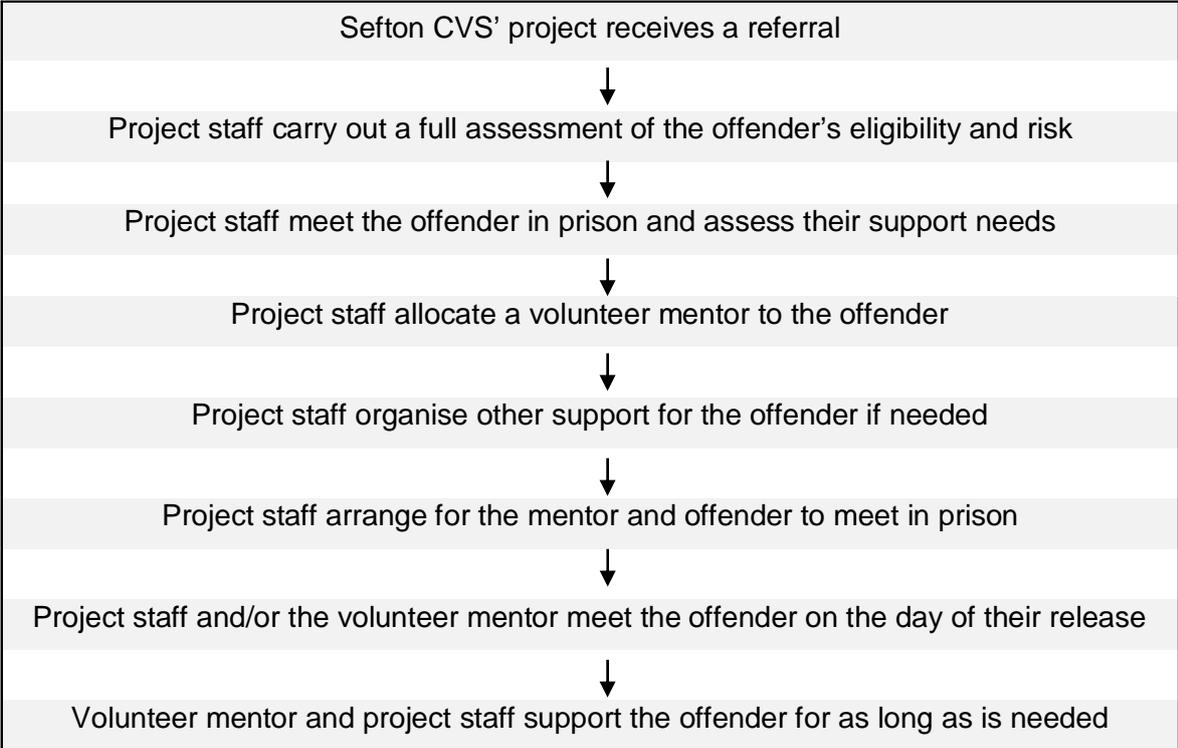
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<sup>9</sup> For more information see the MoJ summary of evidence on reducing reoffending: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243718/evidence-reduce-reoffending.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243718/evidence-reduce-reoffending.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> HMP Liverpool is a Category B/C prison for remand and sentenced adult males in the Merseyside catchment area. HMP Liverpool reported that it discharged 2,903 offenders in the period May 2011 to November 2012 (the period in which the project received referrals during this evaluation).

The Sefton CVS project was based in their main office. Project staff visited the prison regularly to meet offenders and introduce offenders to their volunteer mentors who then supported offenders after their release from prison. The Sefton CVS model of support is outlined in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1: The Sefton CVS model**



**The Catch22 project**

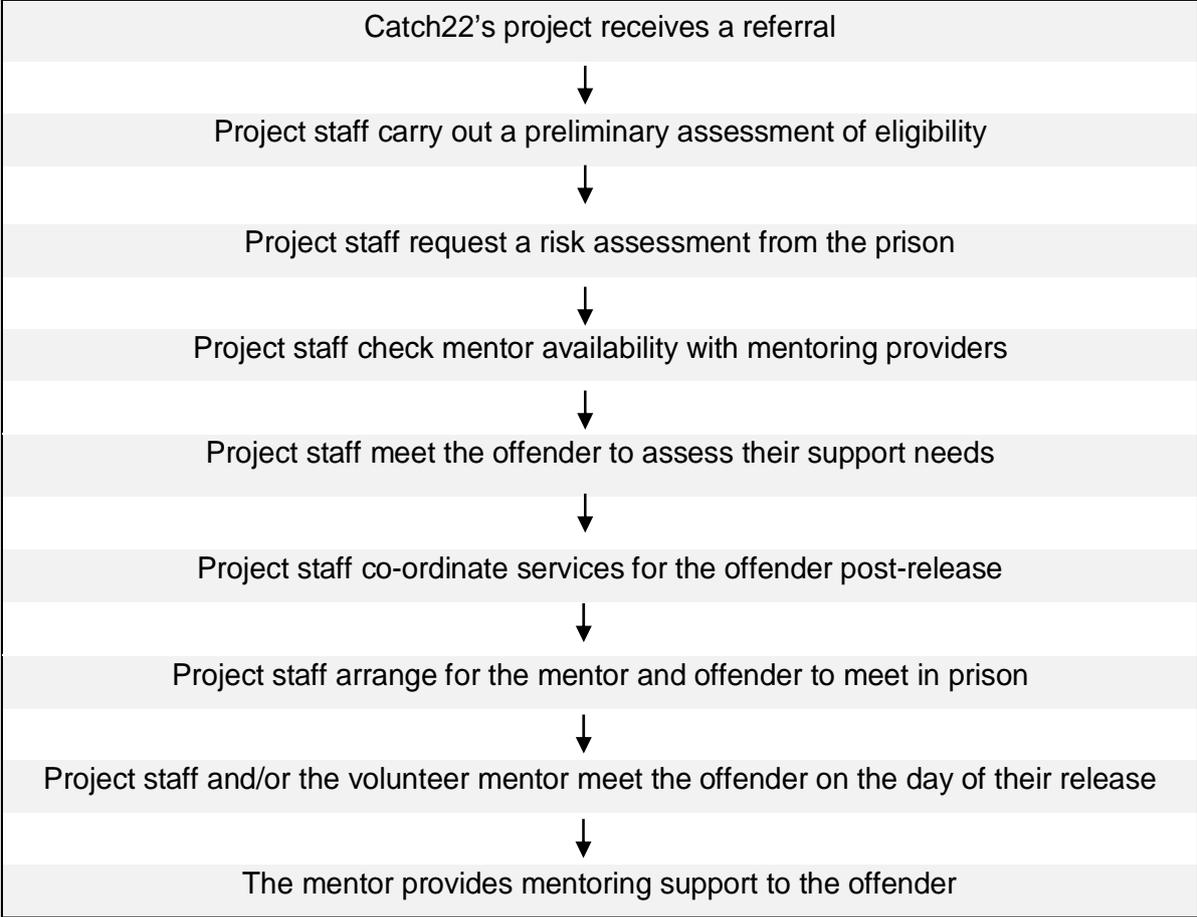
Catch22 was commissioned to provide mentoring to offenders who were due to be released from HMP Nottingham into Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.<sup>11</sup>

Catch22's model involved recruiting, training and supporting local VCS organisations to provide mentoring for offenders leaving prison. Its role was then to set up the mentoring relationships and liaise with providers to deliver the mentoring. The model also included a small payment incentive, where organisations received £500 when they signed up as a provider, a further £500 for each offender who was matched with a mentor and up to £75 for

<sup>11</sup> HMP Nottingham is a Category B men's prison receiving prisoners sentenced by the courts in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. HMP Nottingham reported that it discharged 3,099 offenders in the period June 2011 to November 2012 (the period in which the project received referrals during this evaluation).

further contact between mentors and offenders.<sup>12</sup> Catch22's model of support is outlined in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Catch22's model**



## 2.4 This evaluation

NOMS commissioned a process evaluation to assess the set-up and implementation of the two pilot projects and to make recommendations for a possible national roll-out of the model.

The evaluation focused on:

- mapping operational procedures and implementation;
- identifying critical success factors;
- exploring the perceived impact of the projects from the points of view of all those involved;
- identifying the central components of a successful model for roll-out.

<sup>12</sup> Catch22 made payments to mentoring providers of £25 for each face-to-face meeting between mentors and offenders and £10 for telephone or email contact. This was capped at £75 per mentoring relationship.

The evaluation covered the period from March 2011 to November 2012 and used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The evaluation was not intended to measure the impact of the projects on reoffending as sample sizes would have been too small to detect an effect, although perceptions of impact were gathered from stakeholders and offenders.

## 3. Approach

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the set-up and implementation of two pilot projects.

In particular, the evaluation aimed to investigate:

- how each pilot project set up and provided a mentoring service for offenders leaving prison;
- what kind of support each project provided to offenders;
- what factors facilitated and hindered delivery of the projects;
- what impact the projects had on the individuals and organisations involved.

### 3.1 Methodology

A mixed methodological approach was adopted, combining an analysis of qualitative data collected mainly through semi-structured interviews and quantitative data collected by the pilot projects.

The evaluation explored the experiences of stakeholders and their views of the projects through analysing qualitative data gathered through:

- interviews with 53 offenders who had been matched with a mentor;
- 51 interviews with representatives from prison, police and probation services and VCS organisations involved with the projects;
- interviews with 12 mentors.<sup>13</sup>

An online survey was also sent out to mentors, which received 67 responses.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the evaluation examined quantitative data which included information on:

- the number of offenders referred to the projects, their key demographics and underlying needs;
- the extent of their engagement with the projects;
- the processes of assessing and matching offenders with mentors;
- the support provided to offenders by project staff and mentors;
- the number and profile of mentoring providers and mentors recruited by the projects.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 2 for copies of the interview schedules used.

## 3.2 Analysis

Qualitative data were classified and organised using a process of inductive analysis. This involved coding data using a 'bottom up' approach rather than a pre-existing coding frame, or the researchers' analytic preconceptions (Thomas, 2003). The coded and categorised data were then analysed by grouping segments of data into themes and sub-themes.

Analysis of quantitative data involved examining the profiles of offenders and the support they received.<sup>15</sup> Further analysis was carried out to look at specific sub-sets of offenders including those:

- serving short sentences;
- who were/were not matched with a mentor;
- who completed/disengaged from mentoring.

A more detailed description of the evaluation design and process, including copies of the evaluation tools and accompanying forms, can be found in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

## 3.3 Limitations

Over 300 offenders received mentoring support from the projects. However, the difficulties discussed earlier resulted in interviews with only a small sample of these offenders (17%). The interview sample itself may also have reflected some bias, as nearly two-thirds of the offender interviews were with offenders who had completed mentoring and who may have had more positive views of the support than offenders who did not complete mentoring. Furthermore, as it was impossible to interview any offenders who disengaged from the projects, their views are not included, which means that the findings may not be representative of the wider views of the eligible population. Consequently, this limits the generalisability of the findings and the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn.

The interviews with project stakeholders were carried out with individuals from a variety of organisations and roles. However, the evaluators were not able to consult all stakeholders. Although this process enabled the evaluation to take account of a range of perspectives, it is not possible to say how representative these interviewees were of all stakeholders.

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<sup>14</sup> The projects recruited a total of 175 mentors. As surveys were sent out on three occasions, it is likely that some mentors completed more than one survey. However, because the surveys were anonymous, it is impossible to tell how many different mentors responded to the surveys.

Finally, the evaluation assessed the processes involved in setting up and implementing the pilot projects. Although some data relating to the projects' outcomes and impact were gathered, this was not the focus of the evaluation.

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<sup>15</sup> Cleansing the data involved checking for duplicate records and for any missing data or apparent inconsistencies.

## 4. Results

This chapter discusses the set-up and delivery of the Informal Mentoring Project and what can be learnt from this. It covers:

- the delivery models of the projects;
- the process of setting up and implementing the projects;
- the delivery of mentoring support to offenders;
- the critical success factors emerging from this;
- the perceived impact of the projects;
- the central components of a successful mentoring model.

### 4.1 Delivery models

Catch 22 and Sefton CVS were selected to deliver the Informal Mentoring Project as their models offered different approaches to mentoring offenders on their release from prison. The experiences of Sefton CVS show the potential for a non-specialist, community-based organisation to provide mentoring for offenders leaving prison whereas Catch22's experiences show how a national organisation can support other organisations to provide the mentoring. As neither organisation had specific experience of providing mentoring for offenders *leaving* prison, their experiences also provide further learning around the issues in setting up and running these kinds of projects. Both projects had experience of running projects in prison and of providing mentoring in the community.

Although both projects had planned to recruit local VCS organisations to provide mentors, Sefton CVS struggled to find organisations with the capacity to provide mentoring support and therefore redesigned its model, based on recruiting and training their own volunteers. During the time it took to do this, project staff provided mentoring support for offenders.

Both projects had initially stated that they aimed to engage 200 to 300 offenders over the first 12 months of operation and for 80% of mentoring relationships to involve a minimum of three contacts.<sup>16</sup> As the set-up of the projects took longer than expected, neither project initially had enough staff or mentors to work with the large numbers of offenders being referred to them and the targets were revised accordingly.

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<sup>16</sup> The minimum of three contacts was defined as two face-to-face meetings and one further interaction between offenders and their mentors.

## 4.2 Setting up and implementing informal mentoring

Many of the factors that influenced the set-up and implementation of the projects were common to both organisations, although their experiences were also influenced by local factors and by their individual models.

### Project base

The Sefton CVS project was based in the community whereas Catch22's project was based in the prison. Some stakeholders felt that being community-based meant that the Sefton CVS project was seen by offenders as being independent of the prison, which made them keener to engage. On the other hand, being prison-based meant that Catch22's staff felt they had easier access to offenders and could work more closely with other agencies in the prison. However, it also meant that, at times, their work was affected by lockdowns or other changes to the prison regime.

### Set-up

Both organisations set out to recruit staff with relevant skills and experience. In particular, they felt it was important that staff had experience of working in prisons, providing mentoring services and supporting vulnerable people.

You need versatile people who can manage offenders and professionals....  
somebody with a good track record of working in partnerships and with  
experience of delivering mentoring in a sensitive area. (Project manager)

However, recruiting the right staff took considerable time and resulted in senior staff joining after the set-up phase of the projects.<sup>17</sup> Once in post, staff from both projects found that a great deal of their time was initially taken up developing systems and procedures for recruiting and training volunteers, engaging with offenders and for sharing information. As a result, many of the stakeholders who were involved in setting up the projects felt that a longer set-up period was required.

We needed a longer lead-in time ... At least four to six months for building  
relationships and putting in place systems without any expectation to deliver a  
match during that period. (Project staff)

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<sup>17</sup> The set-up phase was from March to May 2011. Sefton CVS recruited two part-time support workers who joined the project in May 2011 and a full-time co-ordinator who joined the project in June 2011. Catch22 recruited a full-time project co-ordinator who joined the project in May 2011.

My only criticism of the scheme is that they expected to get it up and running too quickly. By the time we got everything worked out, we were four months into the scheme. (Police officer)

In addition, both organisations increased staffing levels during the project, suggesting that the initial resources allocated to the projects were inadequate.<sup>18</sup>

Both projects also recognised the importance of establishing and maintaining an active presence in the prison to ensure that prisoners were aware of their services. Project staff therefore devoted considerable time and resources to publicising their projects to offenders and prison staff.

[What's worked well is that] we have a radio station in the prison and one of the support workers was interviewed for a programme. We also have posters on every wing. (Prison staff)

## Management

The Sefton CVS project was managed from the outset by a senior member of staff within the organisation who had been directly involved in setting up the project and therefore had a good understanding of the project and its context. On the other hand, Catch22's project was initially managed by staff in its London office, which meant that the project suffered from a lack of local presence and project staff lacked support. In November 2011, line management was therefore transferred to a local manager who provided more direct support to project staff and who had considerable experience of working in prisons.

## Relationships with other agencies

Securing the support of other local agencies, particularly that of their respective Prison Governors, was crucial to both projects.

Sefton CVS stated they spent a great deal of time getting other local agencies on board during the preparation of its bid to NOMS. In addition, it already had strong relationships with statutory agencies through its involvement in the local Community Safety Partnership and the

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<sup>18</sup> Sefton CVS increased staff hours and recruited an additional project worker in August 2011 so that the co-ordinator could focus on future funding for the project. Catch22's project recruited a temporary project worker in August 2011 and a full-time project worker joined the team in April 2012. The project was also supported by a regular volunteer who maintained the database and three student interns who helped arrange the mentoring.

Offender Management Board. Nonetheless, project staff described spending considerable time networking with statutory agencies in order to develop and strengthen these relationships. Feedback suggests that this was effective as staff from their local agencies clearly valued the relationships they established with project staff.

The team are very professional and our dealings with them are very easy.  
We give them access to the prison and they work well with our officers.

(Prison staff)

Catch22 stated they did not establish relationships with other local agencies until the project was set up, which meant that these relationships had to be built up from scratch. Moreover, the project encountered some resistance from prison staff who had experienced difficulties with a previous mentoring scheme in the prison.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, as the project's focus reflected the prison's own priorities, the Prison Governor and other prison staff actively supported the project's implementation and facilitated its development.

Their input has been great. There's very little for prisoners who are not on licence. This has bridged a gap. It's a further resource to help with the offenders.

(Prison staff)

Other relationships were also important to the projects' development and project staff worked hard to establish these relationships and ensure they remained positive and effective.

Both projects also set up service level agreements with their respective prisons in order to share information and ensure that resettlement services were co-ordinated, particularly for offenders serving sentences of more than 12 months.

### **Recruiting, training and supporting volunteer mentors**

Establishing a pool of suitable mentors was key to the development of the projects. Although project staff found that it was relatively easy to attract volunteers, many lacked the necessary skills and experience. Project staff were therefore careful to only accept mentors who they felt had "common sense, some life experience and the ability to listen".

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<sup>19</sup> Prison staff reported that a previous scheme had not been successful due to a lack of local mentoring provision.

They also found that although many people were keen to volunteer as mentors, not all could be available to support offenders at short notice.

A lot of the people who want to do it aren't suitable such as students with their timetable arrangements or people with childcare responsibilities.

(Mentoring provider)

The two projects also found that ex-offenders were keen to volunteer as peer mentors although they needed greater support and supervision to become effective mentors.<sup>20</sup>

We have strict criteria that individuals have done transformative work on themselves and are not carrying too much baggage. (Mentoring provider)

More generally, project staff reported that training and supporting mentors required considerable time and resources.<sup>21</sup> Feedback from mentors indicated that this investment was worthwhile and that the training had prepared them well for the mentoring.

I thought the training was outstanding. They didn't pull any punches. They made it very clear what we were letting ourselves in for and they challenged us to step outside our comfort zone. It really gave us a chance to develop skills that may come in handy when you're mentoring. (Mentor)

I got an insight to what will be expected of me and also opened my eyes to things that I never knew about and how best to cope with these situations when the time comes. (Mentor)

Nonetheless, as Table 4.1 shows, over half of the mentors recruited by the projects did not go on to mentor offenders. The projects reported that some had been put off by the time it took to complete security checks whilst others had moved into employment.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Both projects recruited and trained 73 active mentors; over a third (38%) of these were ex-offenders.

<sup>21</sup> Sefton CVS ran a two-day course for mentors focusing on working in a prison context, issues for offenders and the mentoring role. They also provided weekly support to mentors either by telephone or face-to-face. Catch22 ran a one-day course in the prison to prepare mentors for mentoring offenders and kept in contact with mentors by telephone when mentors were actively mentoring offenders.

<sup>22</sup> Mentors had to be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (previously the Criminal Records Bureau and Independent Safeguarding Authority) as well as the prisons' security procedures.

**Table 4.1: The projects' mentors**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Number who became active mentors	35 (33%)	38 (54%)	73 (42%)
Number who did not become active mentors	72 (67%)	32 (46%)	104 (58%)
Number of mentors recruited	105 (100%)	70 (100%)	175 (100%)

As a result, both projects found they needed to recruit and train mentors on an ongoing basis in order to maintain an adequate number of active mentors.

Project staff also described providing a considerable amount of support to mentors once they had begun mentoring offenders. Again, this was clearly valued by mentors as feedback shows that they felt safe and well supported.

The team provide me with excellent support. They are always on the phone to monitor how things are going with my mentee. (Mentor)

**Recruiting mentoring providers**

The projects had initially planned to recruit other local VCS organisations to become mentoring providers. However, both organisations experienced difficulties finding local organisations to take on this role.

Sefton CVS was unable to recruit any local VCS organisations as mentoring providers as they found that organisations were struggling to survive the economic downturn and simply did not have the capacity to take on additional work. Catch22 were more successful in this and recruited ten local VCS organisations as mentoring providers. These organisations said they were attracted by the opportunity to gain experience of working with offenders and receive additional training and support rather than by the financial incentives offered by Catch22.

## Working with mentoring providers

Mentoring providers received training and support from Catch22 as well as the opportunity to join a network which enabled them to collaborate with other providers.

We share information about how we train our mentees and support them. It's very useful. (Mentoring provider)

Despite this, Catch22 experienced difficulties sustaining their engagement; by the end of the evaluation period, half of Catch22's providers had withdrawn from the project. For most, this was due to a lack of resources.

Like most charities, we are really struggling with capacity and to make it work well is a lot of effort and time. (Mentoring provider)

However, one provider withdrew as they found it difficult to work with some aspects of Catch22's model. In particular, they struggled with the limited information Catch22 was able to provide on offenders and the short notice given for their mentors to meet offenders at the prison gate.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the organisations who became established mentoring providers felt that they developed effective relationships with Catch22.

They have been really positive and supportive. We have received all the support we needed to deal with this level of work. (Mentoring provider)

## Monitoring and reporting

As neither project had an established system for monitoring their work in place when they set up, both projects initially struggled to report on their progress. However, over time and with additional support and resources, both projects were able to develop systems which enabled them to monitor and report on their progress. Nonetheless, Catch22 continued to experience difficulties getting information back from mentoring providers, which affected its ability to report on the progress of mentoring relationships.

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<sup>23</sup> Due to restrictions on what information could be communicated electronically, sensitive information on offenders could only be shared verbally with providers.

## **Sustaining the projects**

Finally, as both projects approached the end of the pilot period, they recognised the need to seek funding to sustain their work. In Catch22's case, HMP Nottingham had initially considered providing continuation funding for the project although subsequent budget cuts meant that this did not prove possible. Project staff reported that being largely focused on service delivery made it difficult to undertake further efforts to sustain the project and the project has now ended. Sefton CVS, on the other hand, took on extra staff to enable its co-ordinator to focus on fundraising and successfully secured funding to sustain its work.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the findings show that both projects faced considerable challenges in setting up and delivering mentoring services for offenders. However, the time and resources they invested in securing the active support of their key stakeholders and developing appropriate processes enabled them to overcome many of these challenges.

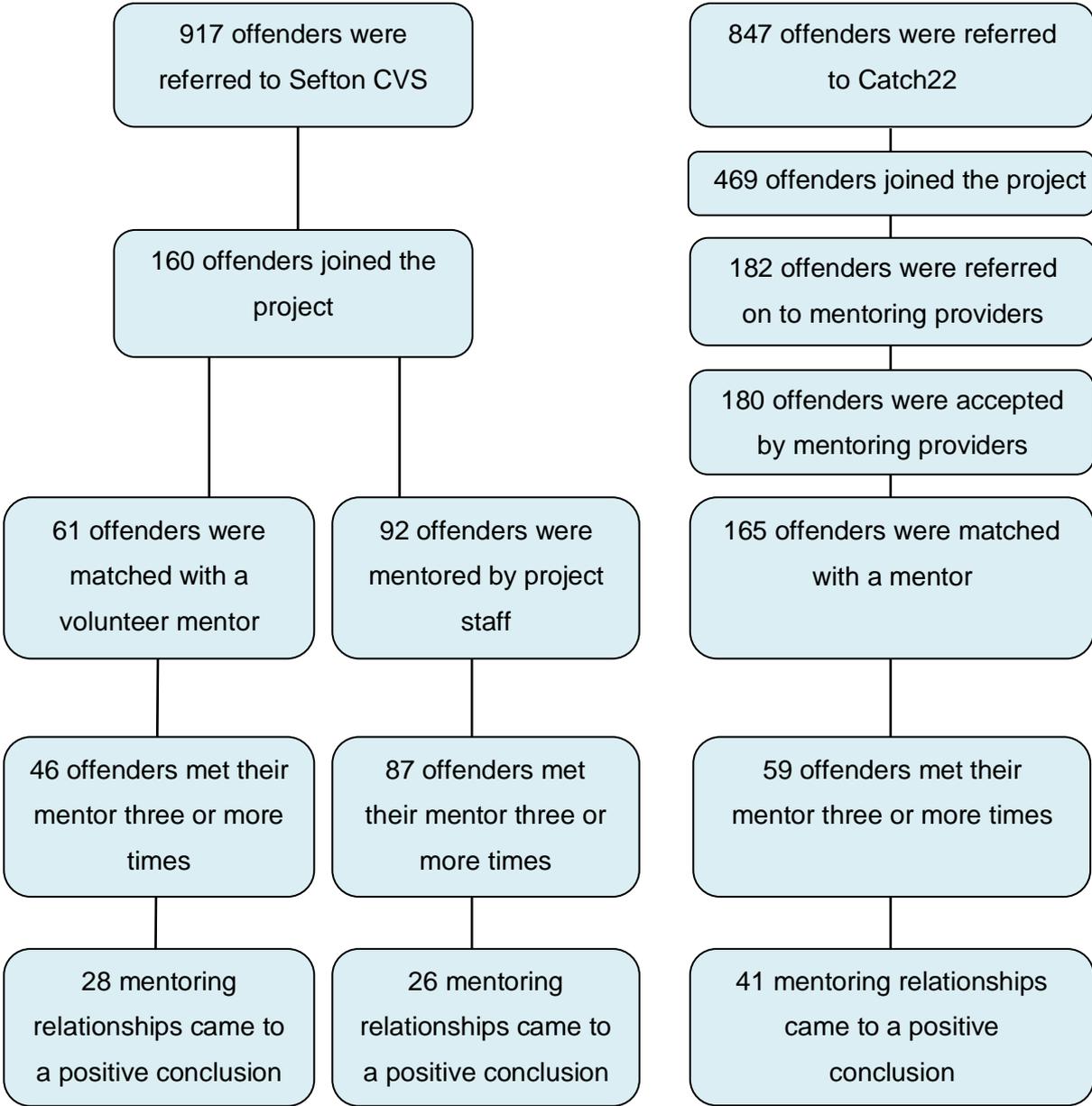
Service development was reported by interviewees to be hampered by the impact of the economic downturn on local VCS organisations. This affected the ability of both projects to make full use of existing community-based mentoring provision in the way in which it had initially been envisaged.

In addition, their experiences highlight the need for realistic time and resources for the set-up phase in order to ensure projects can establish a solid foundation for their work. The high drop-out rate of mentors experienced by both projects emphasises the importance of allowing adequate resources for recruiting, training and supporting volunteers on an ongoing basis.

### 4.3 Providing mentoring support to offenders

This section describes the mentoring support each project provided to offenders. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the process of providing this support. The following pages explain some of the reasons (where known) for attrition.

**Figure 4.1: Overview of project delivery between June 2011 and November 2012**



*Note.* At the time this evaluation was concluded, seven of Sefton CVS' cases and 136 of Catch22's cases were still open and had not yet been matched with a mentor.

## Referrals

Between June 2011 and November 2012, the projects received similar numbers of referrals which, as Table 4.2 shows, represented around a third of the offenders released from both prisons.

**Table 4.2: Referrals and releases**

June 2011 – November 2012	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Number of offenders referred to the projects	917	847	1,764
Number of offenders released from each prison	2,791	3,099	5,890
Percentage of offenders referred to the projects	33%	27%	30%

The projects received most of their referrals either from prison staff or from offenders themselves.<sup>24</sup>

## Profile

Table 4.3 shows that the majority of offenders referred to the projects were White British and aged between 21 and 40. This is largely representative of the offenders held in each prison.

**Table 4.3: Key characteristics of offenders referred to the projects**

	Sefton CVS	HMP Liverpool	Catch22	HMP Nottingham
White British	94%	84%	87%	74%
BAME	3%	10%	12%	24%
Aged 21 - 40	60%	70%	60%	74%

*Note.* Project figures are based on the 917 offenders referred to Sefton CVS and the 847 referred to Catch22. Prison statistics were taken from the Prison Inspectorate Report for HMP Liverpool (2011) and the Prison Inspectorate Report for HMP Nottingham (2010).

However, as Table 4.3 also shows, the proportion of offenders from BAME backgrounds was smaller than the proportion of BAME offenders in each prison. The reasons for this are not known. As Table 4.4 shows, the majority of offenders referred to both projects were serving sentences of less than 12 months, a far higher proportion than was seen in each prison, suggesting that mentoring support was particularly attractive to this group of offenders.

<sup>24</sup> Sefton CVS' database did not identify self-referrals but interviews with prison and project staff revealed that many requests for support had come from offenders themselves.

**Table 4.4: Length of sentence of offenders referred to the projects**

	Sefton CVS	HMP Liverpool	Catch22	HMP Nottingham
Under 12 months	69%	21%	52%	15%
Over 12 months	27%	50%	32%	41%
On remand	4%	29%	15%	44%
Not known	1%	0%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Note.* Totals may not sum due to rounding. Prison statistics were taken from the Prison Inspectorate Report for HMP Liverpool (2011) and the Prison Inspectorate Report for HMP Nottingham (2010).

This was reflected in feedback from stakeholders who felt that the projects’ support was particularly relevant for offenders serving short sentences.

We all know people flourish when they are mentored but the idea of this support being put in place for any offender especially for those on short sentences is really positive. (Prison staff)

As Table 4.5 shows, around a third of offenders had been convicted of offences involving robbery, burglary, theft or handling stolen goods and over a fifth of offences involving violence against the person.

The vast majority of offenders also had a history of previous convictions.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that some of the offenders referred to the projects were caught in a cycle of reoffending.

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<sup>25</sup> 82% of the offenders referred to Sefton CVS and 89% of those referred to Catch22 had previous convictions.

**Table 4.5: Index offence of offenders referred to the projects**

Index offence	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Arson	0 (0%)	7 (1%)	7 (1%)
Breach/recall	0 (0%)	160 (19%)	160 (9%)
Criminal damage	27 (3%)	18 (2%)	45 (3%)
Driving offences	0 (0%)	21 (2%)	21 (1%)
Drug offences	104 (11%)	48 (6%)	152 (9%)
Fraud / forgery	23 (2%)	8 (1%)	31 (2%)
Possession of offensive weapon	13 (1%)	11 (1%)	24 (1%)
Robbery or burglary, theft & handling stolen goods	282 (31%)	300 (35%)	585 (33%)
Sexual offences	27 (3%)	11 (1%)	38 (2%)
Violence against the person	220 (24%)	176 (21%)	396 (22%)
Other	213 (23%)	87 (10%)	300 (17%)
Not known	8 (1%)	0 (0%)	8 (1%)
Total	917 (100%)	847 (100%)	1,764 (100%)

Note. Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

## Presenting needs

Feedback from project staff, mentors and offenders themselves indicated that most offenders presented to the projects with complex and multiple needs.

He has massive issues regarding housing, debt, personal stuff. He doesn't cope with life very well really. (Mentor)

We assume that when people leave they are ready to do things but there are so many barriers – homelessness, addiction, coping with waiting times for appointments, literacy issues... those are really important. (Mentoring provider)

Although project data were relatively limited in relation to offenders' circumstances, they do show that:

- nearly two-thirds of the offenders referred to Sefton CVS and over half of those referred to Catch22 had a history of substance misuse,<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> 63% of the offenders referred to Sefton CVS and 53% of the offenders referred to Catch22 had a history of substance misuse.

- around a fifth of the offenders referred to Catch22 had no stable or permanent accommodation after their release;<sup>27</sup>
- nearly three-quarters of the offenders referred to Catch22 had no support from others, such as family and friends.<sup>28</sup>

Interviews with offenders suggested that they were particularly keen to receive support with practical issues such as finding accommodation or employment or accessing services to address substance misuse issues.

I need that extra bit of help to help me kick my drug habit and find housing.  
(Offender)

I need quite a bit of help. I need help with bank accounts, ID, stuff like that.  
(Offender)

Only a minority specifically described wanting someone to talk to, although some referred to a need for general support with resettlement issues.

I want some general extra support for when I got to make sure I stayed on the right path rather than go down the wrong one again.  
(Offender)

### Assessing referrals

Each project developed its own system for checking the eligibility of offenders and assessing the potential risk they might pose to others. As Table 4.6 shows, just over a third of the offenders referred to the projects went on to join the projects.

A far higher proportion of offenders joined Catch22's project than the Sefton CVS project. There are a number of reasons for this difference. Firstly, Sefton CVS was unable to accept nearly half of the referrals it received as offenders were due to be released outside its catchment area whereas Catch22, with its much larger catchment area, only received referrals for a minority of offenders who were out of the area.

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<sup>27</sup> 22% of the offenders referred to Catch22 were recorded as having no fixed abode. This information was not available from Sefton CVS.

<sup>28</sup> 70% of the offenders referred to Catch22 were recorded as having no support from others (this information was available for 580 offenders). This information was not available from Sefton CVS.

Secondly, over a quarter of the offenders referred to Sefton CVS withdrew from the project following their assessment interview. Project staff explained that they used these interviews as a means of ensuring that only offenders who were committed to the mentoring were taken on by the project.<sup>29</sup> Catch22, on the other hand, mainly used its assessment interviews to focus on the support offenders wanted rather than on their motivation for mentoring.

**Table 4.6: Outcome of referrals**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
<b>Total number referred</b>	<b>917 (100%)</b>	<b>847 (100%)</b>	<b>1764 (100%)</b>
<b>Number who were ineligible/not accepted at assessment</b>	<b>500 (55%)</b>	<b>198 (23%)</b>	<b>698 (40%)</b>
<i>Out of area</i>	419 (46%)	37 (4%)	456 (26%)
<i>On remand</i>	33 (4%)	0 (0%)	33 (2%)
<i>Too high risk/nature of offence</i>	31 (3%)	144 (17%)	175 (10%)
<i>Other</i>	17 (2%)	17 (2%)	34 (2%)
<b>Number deemed eligible at assessment</b>	<b>417 (45%)</b>	<b>649 (77%)</b>	<b>1066 (60%)</b>
<b>Number who withdrew/excluded before participating</b>	<b>257 (28%)</b>	<b>180 (21%)</b>	<b>437 (25%)</b>
<i>Transferred to another prison</i>	7 (1%)	137 (16%)	144 (8%)
<i>Re-arrested/on bail/court case pending</i>	11 (1%)	1 (1%)	12 (1%)
<i>Did not want/need a mentor</i>	239 (26%)	42 (5%)	281 (16%)
<b>Number who joined the project</b>	<b>160 (17%)</b>	<b>469 (55%)</b>	<b>629 (36%)</b>

Thirdly, Catch22 assessed nearly a fifth of the offenders referred to its project as too high risk or unsuitable for mentoring. This was far higher than Sefton CVS and results from the different approach taken by each project to assessing offenders' risk. Sefton CVS staff carried out an in-depth assessment which involved checking relevant information on its referral form and the prison database and discussing referrals with prison officers and the police. Catch22, on the other hand, did not have the time or resources to carry out such an

<sup>29</sup> Project data did not record the reasons why offenders decided they no longer wanted or needed a mentor.

in-depth assessment and relied on prison staff to carry out checks on the prison's database and the Offender Assessment System to identify offenders who would be unsuitable for mentoring. As a result, Sefton CVS's procedures enabled staff to gain a good understanding of the potential risk offenders might present and identify ways to manage this (e.g. by using more experienced mentors to support higher-risk offenders). Catch22's assessment process meant that project staff not only had to rely on prison staff providing risk information but also had to take account of mentoring providers' attitudes to working with offenders who might pose a risk to their mentors.

Finally, a large proportion of the offenders referred to Catch22 were transferred to other prisons before the project could work with them. Project staff explained that as a local prison, HMP Nottingham had to maintain enough capacity to receive offenders sentenced by local courts and therefore transferred offenders to other prisons on a regular basis. This was not such an issue for Sefton CVS.

In addition, the process was further complicated in Catch22's case by the need to liaise with mentoring providers to find a suitable mentor. As a result, a further fifth of offenders who joined Catch22's project were released before they could be matched with a mentor.<sup>30</sup>

### **Matching offenders and mentors**

As Table 4.7 shows, around half of the offenders who joined the projects were matched with mentors and thus provided with some degree of support. This represents around a fifth of the offenders referred to the projects. In Sefton CVS's case, 92 of these offenders were mentored by project staff in the first six months of the project.

Staff from both projects reported that the process of matching mentors to offenders was complex as it needed to take account of a range of factors including:

- offenders' needs and circumstances;
- where they would be living on release;
- mentors' skills and experience;
- mentors' availability.

We work as a team to match mentors. It's a group decision and we all have to believe it's the right match. (Project staff)

In Catch22’s case, a large number of offenders could not be matched with mentors as they were released from prison before the project was able to match them with a mentor. This was clearly linked to Catch22’s more complex matching process which meant that staff had to liaise with mentoring providers and mentors before a match could be made. In addition, both projects were still active and had a number of cases still waiting to be matched at the point at which the evaluation was concluded. It is therefore likely that, particularly in Catch22’s case, the total number of offenders matched by the project will increase considerably.

**Table 4.7: Offenders matched with mentors**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Total number of offenders referred	917 (100%)	847 (100%)	1764 (100%)
Total number who joined the projects	160 (17%)	469 (55%)	629 (36%)
Case still open but not yet matched	7 (1%)	136 (16%)	143 (8%)
Released before being matched	0 (0%)	168 (20%)	168 (10%)
Total number mentored	153 (17%)	165 (19%)	318 (18%)
<i>Mentored by a volunteer mentor</i>	61 (7%)	165 (19%)	226 (13%)
<i>Mentored by project staff</i>	92 (10%)	0 (0%)	92 (5%)

*Note.* Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding. 143 cases were still open at the time at which the evaluation was concluded as the projects were still active at that point.

**Supporting offenders pre-release**

To enable mentors to provide effective mentoring support, project staff spent considerable time supporting offenders pre-release. This was because resettlement services appeared to be scarce and poorly co-ordinated and project staff therefore needed to co-ordinate support so that mentors could help offenders access essential services on their release.

This is intensive support... We have to do this....If you wait until they are out, it’s just not going to happen. (Project staff)

<sup>30</sup> Catch22 was unable to match 77 offenders as they could not find an available mentor and 91 offenders were released earlier than expected.

However, providing this support required time, resources and a knowledge of available services, which project staff and other stakeholders felt was beyond the scope of most mentors.

For the offenders being released, a lot of their immediate needs cannot be addressed by the mentor. (Prison staff)

In addition, project staff found they needed to give offenders encouragement and reassurance as they approached release, which could help promote and sustain their motivation to change (Sapouna, 2011). Feedback from offenders shows that they valued this support.

She put things in place for my release – helped me towards my accommodation which was a major issue. (Offender)

### Arranging for offenders to meet mentors pre-release

Both project and prison staff talked about the importance of enabling offenders to meet their mentors pre-release.

The fact that they meet them in here increases the chances of them working together when the prisoners are released. This is a key aspect and not just for mentoring but all the agencies we work with. (Prison staff)

Offenders also felt it was important.

It was good to meet with them before... to break the ice, get to know them. (Offender)

It was so much better that we had met before in the prison. I built up a relationship with him. (Offender)

However, as Table 4.8 shows, the projects had varying amounts of success in making this happen. Whilst all the offenders mentored by Sefton CVS staff in the first six months of the project were able to meet project staff pre-release, less than a fifth of the offenders matched to volunteer mentors were able to meet their mentors pre-release. This was because the prison did not initially allow volunteers into the prison and when this was eventually allowed, there were still restrictions on peer mentors going into the prison. On the other hand, the

majority of the offenders matched by Catch22 met their mentors before their release, even though they could only do this through legal visits, which were sometimes difficult to arrange.

**Table 4.8: When offenders first met their volunteer mentors**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Met pre-release	11 (18%)	143 (87%)	154 (68%)
Met on day of release	1 (2%)	13 (8%)	14 (6%)
Met within a week of release	4 (7%)	4 (2%)	8 (4%)
Met 2 – 4 weeks after release	30 (49%)	3 (2%)	33 (15%)
Met more than a month after release	15 (25%)	2 (1%)	17 (8%)
Total	61 (100%)	165 (19%)	226 (100%)

*Note.* Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

However, it is clearly important for offenders to meet their mentors in the period immediately following their release, as this is a critical time when they are most vulnerable and reported being in need of support. Nearly half of the offenders mentored through Sefton CVS did not meet their mentors until at least two weeks after release.

**Engaging offenders in mentoring**

Feedback from project staff, mentors and offenders showed that a number of factors helped offenders to engage with the mentoring:

- drawing up action plans with offenders helped them identify realistic goals;
- signposting offenders and accompanying them to appointments meant that offenders’ immediate needs could be addressed;
- giving offenders a sense of control of the relationship due to the voluntary nature of the project;
- providing non-judgemental support which enabled offenders to build a relationship of trust with their mentors;
- having someone who had given up their time voluntarily for them.

Comments from offenders included:

He’s very friendly, not judgemental. He just instantly accepted me, didn’t look down at me.

It's been fantastic honestly. We meet every week and if we can't meet we phone. We've become friends. We sit down, relax, it's really helping me.

It's been brilliant. It takes the weight off everything.

She speaks to me as a human being, I'm not a number to her and she never looks like she doesn't want to be around me.

Offenders who had been mentored by a peer mentor particularly valued having someone who had been through a similar experience and who understood their situation.

Nonetheless, as Table 4.9 shows, both projects found it difficult to sustain offenders' engagement in the mentoring process and nearly half of the offenders matched by the projects disengaged from their mentoring relationships.

**Table 4.9: Offenders who disengaged from the mentoring**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Offender disengaged after one contact	6 (4%)	43 (28%)	49 (17%)
Offender disengaged after two or more contacts	49 (36%)	42 (27%)	91 (32%)
Total number who disengaged	55 (40%)	85 (56%)	140 (49%)

*Note.* The figures in this table are based on mentoring relationships which had ended by the time the evaluation was carried out (Sefton CVS: N = 136; Catch22: N = 153).

Project staff and mentors explained that the chaotic nature of many offenders' situations meant that offenders often failed to keep in contact with their mentors post-release.

[Offenders with] no fixed abode is the biggest issue because you can't find them once they get out... We get a hostel address and arrange to meet them and then they don't show up. (Mentor)

Above all, many offenders felt they were not ready to make changes in their lives.

I think if I was ready to change, it would have helped. (Offender)

This was highlighted by project staff and other stakeholders as one of the main barriers to offenders remaining engaged with the mentoring.

The offender has to want to do it, and really make that decision that they don't want to go back in there again. (Mentor)

Furthermore, despite the efforts made by project staff and mentors to help offenders access services, the lack of provision for offenders (at the time of the pilot) after their release (as described by Gojkovic *et al.*, 2012), particularly in terms of housing, meant that the mentoring was often unable to address offenders' immediate needs.

Homelessness is a big issue and many hostels have closed down ... so that hasn't helped the situation. (Project staff)

**Sustaining mentoring relationships**

Table 4.10 shows that nearly a third of mentoring relationships set by the projects came to a positive conclusion – representing those mentoring relationships which the projects had recorded as having come to a mutually agreed, positive conclusion. However, there was a difference between the two projects; a higher proportion of the relationships set up by Sefton CVS came to a positive conclusion.

**Table 4.10: Outcome of mentoring relationships**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Mentoring came to a positive conclusion	54 (40%)	41 (27%)	95 (33%)
Offender disengaged	55 (40%)	85 (56%)	140 (49%)
Offender re-arrested	14 (10%)	9 (6%)	23 (8%)
Offender transferred to another prison	10 (7%)	5 (3%)	15 (5%)
Mentor unable to continue	0 (0%)	5 (3%)	5 (2%)
Other	3 (2%)	8 (5%)	11 (4%)
Total number mentored (by project staff or volunteer)	136 (100%)	153 (100%)	289 (100%)

*Note.* This table is based on mentoring relationships which had ended by the time the evaluation was carried out.

The difference may result from a number of different factors. Firstly, as shown in Tables 4.11 and 4.12, the majority of Sefton CVS's mentoring relationships lasted longer and involved more contact between offenders and mentors.

**Table 4.11: Contact between offenders and mentors**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Length of relationship			
Lasted less than a week	11 (8%)	106 (60%)	117 (40%)
Lasted between two weeks and a month	37 (27%)	47 (27%)	84 (29%)
Lasted more than a month	88 (65%)	23 (13%)	111 (38%)
Total	136 (100%)	176 (100%)	312 (100%)

*Note.* This table is based on mentoring relationships rather than on the number of offenders matched with mentors as 18 of Catch22’s offenders had more than one mentoring relationship.

**Table 4.12: Contact between offenders and mentors**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Total number of contacts between offenders and mentors			
One contact	6 (4%)	61 (40%)	67 (23%)
Two contacts	9 (7%)	36 (24%)	45 (16%)
Three or more contacts	121 (89%)	56 (37%)	177 (61%)
Total	136 (100%)	153 (100%)	289 (100%)

*Note.* This table is based on mentoring relationships which had ended by the time the evaluation was carried out.

Secondly, Sefton CVS’s assessment interviews encouraged offenders to reflect on their motivation to commit to a mentoring relationship, and the opportunity to withdraw before they were matched with a mentor. As a result, offenders who were mentored through Sefton CVS may have been those who were most engaged with the process and therefore more likely to have successful mentoring relationships.

Thirdly, Sefton CVS’s project staff provided considerable support to both mentors and offenders during the mentoring, which was important in enabling mentors to provide effective support and in keeping offenders engaged.<sup>31</sup> Catch22’s staff kept in contact with mentors but did not remain in contact with offenders post-release as the mentoring relationships were managed and supported by mentoring providers.

Finally, Sefton CVS mentored a far higher proportion of offenders with no previous convictions than Catch22.<sup>32</sup> Research has shown that first-time offenders are often

<sup>31</sup> Sefton CVS’s project staff maintained weekly contact and met with mentors at the end of the relationships as they felt this helped to sustain the relationships and guide mentors effectively. They also kept in regular contact with offenders to check that the mentoring continued to meet their needs and address any issues.

<sup>32</sup> 20% of the offenders matched by Sefton CVS had no previous convictions compared to 5% of those matched by Catch22.

particularly keen to avoid reoffending (Trebilcock, 2011), which may explain why more of the offenders mentored by Sefton CVS engaged successfully with the mentoring.

## Conclusion

These findings show that the process of providing mentoring for offenders was complex, lengthy and resource-intensive because:

- offenders presented with multiple needs;
- there was a lack of co-ordinated resettlement support for offenders;
- mentoring relationships took time to set up and required considerable input from project staff in order to sustain offenders' engagement.

As a result, around a fifth of the offenders referred to the projects were able to access mentoring support; the majority of offenders did not receive mentoring because they were ineligible or disengaged before being matched with a mentor.

The findings also suggest that Sefton CVS's model was more effective in sustaining offenders' engagement in the mentoring process and consequently in achieving successful relationships (as defined for this evaluation). Catch22's model, with the extra complexity of working with mentoring providers and very little contact with offenders post-release, resulted in far more offenders disengaging from their mentoring relationships despite the fact that a far higher proportion of the offenders matched by Catch22 had met their mentor pre-release, usually associated with high post-release contact.

## 4.4 Critical success factors

As these findings show, the experiences of the two projects highlighted some aspects that were common to both projects in terms of their set-up and delivery as well as some factors that were specific to each project.

### Common factors

Both projects found that:

- They benefited from recruiting project staff with experience of working with offenders or vulnerable people and experience of providing mentoring. They also benefited from clear leadership and robust management.
- The active support from Prison Governors and other key stakeholders was particularly important in terms of enabling the projects to promote their services,

access offenders and share information relating to the potential risks that offenders might pose to others once released.

- Providing relevant training and considerable support enabled mentors to feel safe and well equipped to fulfil their roles.

However, they also found that:

- They needed a longer set-up period than anticipated for recruiting staff, developing relationships with key stakeholders and setting up systems and procedures.
- A lack of provision for offenders post-release limited the extent to which they could co-ordinate services for offenders before their release and affected mentors' ability to support offenders after their release.
- Recruiting mentors with appropriate skills, experience and the availability to support offenders after their release required considerable time and resources. The projects also needed to recruit enough mentors to account for mentors leaving or not being available when needed.

## Specific factors

### *Sefton CVS*

Three aspects of Sefton CVS's model appear to have helped the project to provide effective mentoring support to offenders:

- the project's assessment process helped to ensure that offenders were more committed to the mentoring;
- project staff provided considerable support to offenders post-release, which helped to sustain their engagement in the mentoring;
- using their own mentors enabled the project to closely manage and support mentoring relationships.

However, the project's criteria for accepting referrals meant that they were unable to provide a service for a large proportion of the offenders referred to the projects.

### *Catch22*

Using other providers to deliver the mentoring enabled Catch22 to:

- match more offenders with volunteer mentors than Sefton CVS;
- cover a larger geographical area.

However, using mentoring providers also made it more difficult for Catch22 to:

- support higher-risk offenders;
- carry out the process of matching offenders and mentors quickly;
- keep in contact with offenders once they had been released.

Engaging other organisations as mentoring providers also required considerable time and resources and relied on providers having the capacity to provide additional services.

## 4.5 Project outcomes

This evaluation focused on what can be learnt from the projects' experiences of providing mentoring support to offenders. However, feedback from stakeholders also provides an insight into the difference the projects made to offenders, mentors and the organisations involved in the projects.

### Outcomes for offenders

Feedback from offenders and analysis of project data provides evidence of change in outcome areas that are linked to desistance. In particular, the evaluation found evidence of offenders:

- being signposted and supported to access services;
- being positively influenced by their mentors;
- developing social connections;
- changing their behaviour.

### Accessing services

As Table 4.13 shows, the majority of the offenders mentored through both projects were signposted and/or accompanied to services. Many of the offenders interviewed described how having their mentor with them at appointments helped them to fill out forms and understand procedures.

I needed help, especially with reading and writing, and filling in forms. It's good to have support with processes. (Offender)

**Table 4.13: Services that offenders were signposted and/or accompanied to**

	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Accommodation services	66 (43%)	125 (76%)	191 (60%)
Drug and alcohol services	40 (26%)	111 (67%)	151 (47%)
Employment, training and education services	79 (52%)	101 (61%)	180 (57%)
Health services	19 (12%)	57 (35%)	76 (24%)
Other services	48 (31%)	61 (37%)	109 (34%)

*Note.* N = 318 (153 for Sefton CVS and 165 for Catch22)

**Changes in feelings and attitudes**

Many of the offenders interviewed valued the emotional support they had received from their mentor and some reported that this had helped them feel better about their future and less isolated.

I feel more positive about myself and a bit more upbeat. (Offender)

Just knowing that someone’s there whereas before I didn’t really feel as if I had anyone to turn to. (Offender)

For some offenders, having a mentor had helped them to feel more in control of their lives.

My life was spiralling out of control and this makes sure I do what I’ve got to do and don’t slip back to the old ways. (Offender)

**Social connections**

Some offenders described how their mentor had helped them to become more involved in their local community. In addition, some of the offenders talked about re-establishing contact with their family whilst others talked about getting volunteer work.

I am thinking about doing a bit of volunteering myself, a bit of mentoring. (Offender)

They sat me down and told me what I needed to do to get help...getting a solicitor and all that. Now I am getting to see my kids. (Offender)

## Changing behaviour

The majority of the offenders interviewed felt that having a mentor had helped them to change their offending behaviour. They described how their mentor had shown them a different path to take and had helped them to avoid the triggers that led to reoffending.

I would be back in prison without them – guaranteed. My way of coping is to reoffend. The minute something goes wrong, I reoffend, I revert to type... But now I know I've got a choice. (Offender)

Those who had subsequently re-offended felt that the mentoring had helped them to stay out of prison for longer.

[The mentoring] kept me out for three and a half months...I used to have a phone full of drug dealers. Now I have a phone full of people who want to help me. (Offender)

Project stakeholders also reported that they had seen changes in the offending behaviour of offenders who had been supported by the projects.

Prisoners who have been mentored tend not to come back and if they do, they want to engage with the mentor as soon as possible. (Prison staff)

Some mentees said they would probably have gone back to what they did before prison if someone like me didn't give them the kind of positiveness and reassurance they needed to keep them on the right track. (Mentor)

Many described this process as one of 'little steps' taken by offenders to make changes in their lives over a period of time which ultimately lead to their desistance from crime.

It's not going to happen overnight. It's about completely changing people's lifestyles and changing their way of thinking. (Prison staff)

Little steps along the way. They may come back but they are that bit closer. (Project staff)

## Outcomes for mentors

Interviews with mentors suggested that they had also benefited from their involvement in the project. Many said they had increased their understanding of the issues faced by offenders whilst others had gained experience which they felt would help their careers.

It has given me experience and knowledge so when I go for jobs I have got loads of experience working with ex-offenders. (Mentor)

More generally, mentors talked about the feeling of fulfilment they gained from being a mentor.

On some occasions I believe I have helped make a significant difference to their lives...which gives you a real warm buzz.

In addition, some peer mentors described how becoming a mentor had helped improve their self-esteem.

Being once more made to feel a part of society... It has enhanced my self-worth.

## Outcomes for organisations involved in the pilot projects

Statutory stakeholders felt that the projects had acted as a catalyst for more effective partnership working and provided them with an additional source of support for offenders.

Before Catch22 came I had nobody to refer into as a mentoring service in Derbyshire. I don't know what I'd do if they went away now. (Police officer)

Some VCS providers described how their involvement had helped to increase their understanding of working in a prison context and, in some cases, to extend their services beyond their original client group.

## Conclusion

The projects were felt to be of help as reported by offenders, local VCS providers and statutory agencies. Although evidence of offenders' outcomes is largely based on interviews with a small sample of offenders who may have had particularly positive experiences of the mentoring, these nonetheless provide some evidence of the role mentoring can play in supporting desistance.

There is also evidence that mentors found the experience valuable in terms of increasing their skills and enhancing their career options whilst the interviews with stakeholders suggest that the projects had helped them to work together more effectively, as well as extending the resources available for offenders on their release from prison.

## 4.6 Roll-out

The findings of this evaluation highlight the central components of a successful model of informal mentoring, which future providers may wish to refer to.

### Set-up and implementation

Projects should:

- allow four to six months for set-up to ensure they have enough time to recruit appropriate staff, establish relationships with key stakeholders, set up essential systems and procedures and develop a pool of mentors;
- provide strong line management support to project staff;
- recruit volunteer mentors with appropriate skills and experience and the availability to support offenders immediately after their release and allow time and resources for recruiting mentors on an ongoing basis;
- recognise the value of working with ex-offenders as peer mentors but ensure that they select them carefully and provide them with additional training and support;
- build in sufficient resources to enable project staff to set up and support the mentoring relationships as well as carry out other essential tasks such as promoting their services and monitoring their work;
- work closely with other local providers in order to provide a co-ordinated service for offenders;
- agree targets that are realistic, taking account of the complexities of this kind of work and the high levels of offender disengagement to be expected.

## Providing mentoring

Projects should:

- carry out in-depth assessments of offenders so that they have a clear understanding of their needs and risks and so that offenders commit to the mentoring;
- co-ordinate support for offenders prior to their release so that volunteer mentors can focus on supporting offenders in accessing services and resettling into the community;
- use action plans so that offenders' immediate needs on release from prison are addressed;
- provide mentoring support to offenders around the time of their release from prison as this is when they are most in need of support;
- allow offenders to set the pace of the relationship and offer support for as long as is required;
- provide support to both offenders and mentors during the mentoring relationships;
- recognise that mentoring is likely to be particularly attractive to offenders who do not receive many other services, whilst not excluding others from accessing it.

In addition, it would be beneficial to develop standardised procedures and guidelines and provide new projects with guidance and support, which could include 'buddy' support from more established projects.

## 5. Implications

This section describes the key implications of this process evaluation for policy-makers and practitioners working with offenders and ex-offenders.

### 5.1 Service provision

Both pilot projects were strongly endorsed by their key stakeholders who felt that the projects filled a gap in provision and enabled offenders to access the support they needed on release from prison. This suggests that there is a demand for projects of this nature in order to extend the post-release support available to offenders, especially those on sentences under 12 months. The Transforming Rehabilitation proposals extend statutory support to this group of offenders, which may help to meet this demand.

The evaluation also found that services can be delivered by organisations without specific prior experience of providing mentoring for offenders leaving prison. Furthermore, organisations do not need to be established in the local area or have a criminal justice focus. However, it is essential that they recruit staff with relevant skills and experience, develop strong relationships with stakeholders and understand the local context.

### 5.2 Delivery model

#### Working with other VCS organisations

Building the capacity of local services to provide mentoring for offenders relies on sufficient numbers of local organisations having the resources and experience to deliver mentoring. The effects of the economic downturn on VCS organisations (at the time of the study) may have limited the potential for projects to make use of local organisations to provide mentoring for offenders; one of the pilot projects was unable to identify any local mentoring providers and the other found it difficult to sustain the engagement of many of the organisations it recruited.

### 5.3 Set-up

Both projects also found that a set-up period of three months did not allow enough time for recruiting project staff, developing relationships with key stakeholders and setting up systems and procedures. However, these elements were fundamental to the projects' subsequent effectiveness and sufficient set-up time needs to be built into the design of future projects of this nature.

Effective promotion of the projects is also important in ensuring offenders are able to access mentoring. As there is a constant flow of offenders in and out of prison, promotion needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis and future projects should not underestimate the amount of time and resources this requires.

## **5.4 Working with volunteers**

Whilst the evaluation found that volunteers can play an important role in helping offenders resettle in the community, there are a number of issues that arise when involving volunteers in mentoring offenders.

### **Quality of volunteers**

Mentors need to have relevant skills, experience and availability in order to support offenders effectively. Many people were keen to volunteer as mentors, although the projects found that many would not be suitable as mentors or lacked the availability to support offenders at short notice. Based on this experience, it is possible that the pool of individuals available for mentoring projects of this nature could be limited.

In addition, volunteers may lack the knowledge or resources to address the multiple issues faced by many offenders on their release from prison. Project staff therefore play a crucial role in co-ordinating support for offenders before they are released.

### **Capacity**

Both projects found that they had to invest considerable time and resources in recruiting and training mentors on an ongoing basis in order to meet the demand for mentoring support. At times, a lack of mentors limited their effectiveness, particularly during the early delivery phase. Projects of this kind will therefore need to develop a robust mentor recruitment strategy so that they are able to maintain an adequate pool of available mentors. When working with other mentoring providers, projects will need to ensure that they have a rapid and effective means of sharing information and co-ordinating the provision of the mentoring.

## Support

Mentoring relationships need to be carefully managed to ensure that volunteer mentors are safe and receive enough support. As a result, projects need to allow enough time and resources for assessing risk thoroughly and providing ongoing training and support to their volunteers. In addition, projects using ex-offenders as mentors need to provide additional training and support as the experience of the pilot projects has shown that they had specific support needs.

## Access to offenders

Research (Lewis *et al.*, 2003) suggests that pre-release contact with mentors improves the chances of offenders resettling successfully. Although both projects were able to arrange for their mentors to meet offenders in prison, this took considerable time and prison security regulations continued to limit mentors' access to offenders throughout the project. As individual prisons currently set their own restrictions on volunteers coming into prison, standardising this process across all prisons would enable VCS organisations to work more effectively with prisons.

## 5.5 Working with offenders

### Access to mentoring support

Large numbers of offenders, particularly those on short sentences, were interested in receiving mentoring support. However less than a fifth of the offenders referred to the projects actually went on to receive mentoring support as many were ineligible for the service, were transferred to other prisons or were released before they could be matched with a mentor. It is therefore important to recognise that the number of offenders who receive mentoring may be more limited than expected.

### Sustaining their engagement

Although offenders chose to engage with the mentoring, many subsequently withdrew or disengaged either before or after being allocated a mentor. In particular, both projects found that the chaotic nature of many offenders' lives and the multiple issues they faced prevented them from engaging fully with the mentoring. Other offenders failed to commit to the mentoring simply because they were not ready to make changes in their lives. It is therefore clear that offenders need to be motivated and ready to make changes in their lives.

Mentoring will therefore not be relevant or appropriate for all offenders; providing mentoring support for offenders leaving prison is one of a range of solutions needed to address the complex issue of reoffending.

Nonetheless, the evaluation found that providing services which offenders can access easily and which they feel are relevant to their needs helped to encourage and sustain their engagement in the mentoring. Providing support to both mentors and offenders during the mentoring also appeared to increase the number of relationships which came to a positive conclusion. This highlights the crucial role that project staff play in sustaining mentoring relationships.

### **Access to services**

Previous research indicates that signposting and accompanying offenders to services is important in enabling offenders to take the first steps towards desistance (Sapouna *et al.*, 2011). However, research has also highlighted the lack of provision for offenders leaving prison, especially in relation to housing (Gojkovic, Mills and Meek, 2012) and the particular challenges that short-term offenders face in accessing services. The Transforming Rehabilitation proposals to extend statutory support to those serving under 12 months should help to fill this gap.

Both projects found that a lack of co-ordinated provision for offenders in their areas meant that staff spent considerable time organising support for offenders pre-release and supporting mentors in signposting and accompanying offenders to services. It is therefore clear that the effectiveness of this kind of mentoring is, in part, determined by projects' access to services for offenders post-release. This needs to be taken into account in selecting areas where new mentoring projects can be most effective.

## **5.6 Resources**

Providing mentoring support for offenders is extremely resource-intensive. In particular, this evaluation showed that considerable time is required from experienced, paid staff to support and supervise both mentors and offenders. Although using volunteers to support offenders post-release may appear to provide a relatively low-cost option, the actual cost of providing high-quality, effective services should not be underestimated.

## 5.7 Roll-out

At the time of the research, there was clearly scope to expand the provision of mentoring for offenders on their release from prison. However sufficient funding would need to be made available to organisations. Furthermore, the effectiveness of mentoring support may be limited by a lack of other local provision for offenders (e.g. housing, support with substance misuse, etc.). This may be less of an issue following the Transforming Rehabilitation programme.

It is also important to recognise that mentoring will not be relevant or appropriate for all offenders as there are many barriers to offenders accessing mentoring support. Nonetheless, it can clearly meet a need, particularly among those receiving few other services, and can improve their chances of resettling successfully. Ultimately, informal mentoring has the potential to provide much-needed support for offenders leaving prison but it should not be seen as a simple solution to the complex issue of supporting offenders to resettle successfully after their release from prison.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Evaluation design

An evaluation framework was developed in order to identify the aspects of the project which were to be assessed and the methods that would be used to collect the relevant information. This framework was drawn up in consultation with NOMS and the pilot projects and covered three areas: context, process and outcomes.

The framework also included a timetable for the evaluation activities, some of which involved ongoing data collection by project staff whilst others involved specific activities (e.g. interviews or online surveys). The timetable was guided by the need to provide interim evaluation reports to inform the development of the pilot projects (in January and June 2012), with a final evaluation report at the end of the project.

### Methods

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to gather relevant data from a range of different sources, with the aim of answering the following research questions:

- How did each pilot project set up and provide a mentoring service for offenders leaving prison? What elements were common to both projects and how did their experiences of setting up and running their projects differ?
- What support did each project provide to offenders? What was the profile of the offenders involved?
- Which factors facilitated the delivery of the projects and what barriers did they encounter?
- What impact did the projects have on the individuals and organisations involved?
- What might the central components of a successful mentoring model look like?

Monitoring information was collected in three phases. The first phase of the evaluation was carried out in October 2011 and focused on the set-up of the projects. Findings in this phase were fed back to the projects to inform future development. The second phase of the evaluation was carried out in May 2012 and focused on stakeholders' experiences of the projects' delivery over the first full 12 months of operation. The final phase gathered feedback from stakeholders on the projects' delivery over the full 18 months of operation.

## Interviews with offenders

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with offenders. The majority of the interviews were carried out by telephone as it was felt that offenders would participate more readily if they were offered a degree of anonymity and the option to choose a time and place for the interview. Interview questions were based upon a standard script containing open questions to enable participants to talk more freely about their experiences. Staff from NOMS and both pilot projects were consulted on the design of the interview schedules. The aim of the interviews was to explore:

- offenders' motivation for engaging in mentoring;
- their experiences of the support they had received from the pilot projects and from their mentors;
- what difference they felt having a mentor had made to their experience of coming out of prison.

The initial aim had been to interview a total of at least 80 offenders who had been mentored through the projects, by randomly selecting offenders from all closed cases (i.e. offenders who had been mentored but who were no longer receiving mentoring) at the end of each phase of the evaluation. However, maintaining contact with offenders once they were no longer being mentored proved extremely difficult. As a result, offenders were interviewed while still receiving support from the pilot projects. Despite this, Catch22 project staff found it difficult to follow up offenders who had been mentored as they relied on the mentoring providers and mentors to ask offenders to participate in the evaluation interviews. This proved to be a lengthy process which inevitably resulted in far fewer offenders being available for interview. To compensate for this, additional face-to-face interviews were carried out with some offenders who had returned to prison. The additional interviews with offenders who had returned to prison enabled the evaluators to hear from offenders who had not completed the mentoring. This was important as it enabled information on what went wrong as well as what went well to be captured (albeit to a limited extent).

## Interviews with other stakeholders

For project stakeholders, it was felt that telephone interviews offered greater convenience and were more cost-effective. Interview schedules were therefore designed to explore:

- stakeholders' levels of engagement with the project;
- their experiences of being involved;
- their views on the value and impact of the project.

In addition, staff from both pilot projects were interviewed in order to explore:

- their experiences of setting up their projects;
- the way their projects developed and the challenges they encountered;
- their relationships with other stakeholders;
- their experiences of providing mentoring support for offenders.

These interviews were carried out face to face, both as a group and individually. The group interviews allowed staff to discuss and share their experiences of being involved in the projects while the individual interviews ensured staff could speak confidentially. The interviews were carried out during each phase of the evaluation and were supplemented in June 2012 with individual interviews with project staff and office-based volunteers. This meant that all staff and key volunteers had an opportunity to speak both in a group and on an individual basis to the evaluators.

In order to ensure confidentiality, comments from the interviews included in this report have been anonymised. The interview schedules can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

### **Online surveys to mentors**

An online survey was sent out to the mentors involved in the two projects in each phase of the evaluation (December 2011, June and November 2012) to explore their:

- motivation for becoming involved with the projects;
- experiences of the training and support they received;
- experiences of providing mentoring support for offenders.

It was felt that an online survey was the most effective way of collecting feedback from a large number of mentors as well as enabling mentors to give their views anonymously, therefore encouraging greater openness. Mentors who were unable to access the online survey were invited by the projects to complete the surveys in their offices. The online surveys were supplemented with in-depth telephone interviews with some mentors to provide a deeper insight into their experiences of providing mentoring. The survey questions can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

## Monitoring data collected by the pilot projects

A monitoring protocol was produced to guide the pilot projects in collecting information for the evaluation relating to:

- the number and profile of offenders referred;
- the process of assessing and matching offenders with mentors;
- the support provided to offenders by project staff and by mentors;
- the number and profile of mentors recruited by the projects.

The projects were also asked to provide monthly reports, providing both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as record their work in a database which was analysed at the end of each phase of the evaluation.

## Evaluation sample

The data that were collected provided feedback from a range of the people and organisations involved in the pilot projects.

## Project stakeholders

As shown in Table A1.1, a total of 51 interviews were carried out with representatives from the key organisations involved in the development and implementation of the pilot projects.

**Table A1.1: Interviews with stakeholders**

Number of interviews	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Prison staff	5 (26%)	6 (19%)	11 (22%)
Police officers	5 (26%)	5 (16%)	10 (20%)
Probation staff	3 (16%)	2 (6%)	5 (10%)
VCS agencies	4 (21%)	18 (56%)	22 (43%)
Other agencies	2 (11%)	1 (3%)	3 (6%)
Total	19 (100%)	32 (100%)	51 (100%)

In the case of both projects, this involved interviews, generally on several occasions, with the Prison Governor and senior prison officers most closely involved with each project. It also involved interviews with police staff working in Integrated Offender Management as well as with representatives from probation. Interviews were also carried out with all but one of Catch22's mentoring providers and the two VCS providers most closely involved with the Sefton CVS project.<sup>33</sup> While this process was intended to capture a range of perspectives, it is not possible to say whether the views of the interviewees were representative of those of their organisation generally.

**Offenders**

As shown in Table A1.2, 53 interviews were carried out with offenders. Three-quarters of these interviews were carried out with offenders who had been matched with a volunteer mentor. A further 13 interviews were completed with offenders who had been mentored by Sefton CVS project staff. In total, therefore, interviews were carried out with 18% of the 226 offenders who were mentored by volunteer mentors and 14% of those who were mentored by project staff. Overall, this was a smaller sample than had been hoped but was felt to be reasonable given the difficulties of working with this population.

**Table A1.2: Interviews with offenders**

Number of offenders interviewed	Sefton CVS	Catch22	Total
Telephone interviews with offenders who had completed mentoring	28 (88%)	6 (29%)	34 (64%)
Face-to-face interviews with offenders who had returned to prison	4 (12%)	15 (71%)	19 (36%)
Total	32 (100%)	21 (100%)	53 (100%)

Furthermore, with little control over the process of contacting offenders and obtaining their consent to participate, there ended up being an uneven distribution among the offenders interviewed, both in terms of which project they had been supported by and whether they had completed mentoring or not. This means that offenders' views are not necessarily representative of the wider group of offenders who were supported by the projects.

<sup>33</sup> One mentoring provider could not be interviewed as they withdrew from the project in October 2011 and did not respond to requests to participate in the evaluation.

## Mentors

A total of 67 responses were received to three online surveys; it is likely that some mentors completed surveys on more than one occasion as the surveys were conducted anonymously. As Table A1.3 shows, the response rate ranged from 16% to 59% of the mentors actively involved in the project at each stage of the evaluation. Telephone interviews were also carried out with 12 mentors, representing 16% of the 73 mentors who were actively involved in the projects.

**Table A1.3: Online survey to mentors**

	Sefton CVS			Catch22		
	No. of responses	No. of active mentors	% of active mentors responding	No. of responses	No. of active mentors	% of active mentors responding
December 2012	6	37	16%	10	17	59%
May 2012	18	58	31%	8	33	24%
October 2012	12	30	40%	13	23	57%
Total	36	–	–	31	–	–

## Project records

Analysis was carried out of 1,916 database records of the offenders referred to and supported by the two pilot projects. The majority of these records (1,390) were kept in the Access databases used by both projects to monitor and manage their work. Details of a further 556 cases were supplied by Sefton CVS in an Excel spreadsheet as these offenders had not been taken on by the project. With the exception of these 556 records, which contained only minimal information relating to the offenders' profile and reasons why their referral was not accepted, the records provided by the projects provided relatively comprehensive data on offenders' profiles and the support they received from the projects.

However, data relating to mentors' contact with offenders were more limited as this information could only be supplied by mentors. Efforts were made to ensure that it was as easy as possible for mentors to provide this information. Nonetheless, both projects found it difficult to obtain this information. In Catch22's case, mentors were only asked to provide this information for the first three contacts that took place with offenders.

## Analysis

Qualitative data were classified and organised using a process of inductive analysis. This involved coding the data using a 'bottom up' approach rather than a pre-existing coding frame, or the researchers' analytic preconceptions (Thomas, 2003). The interview transcripts and qualitative data from the online surveys were read several times to identify major themes. After discussion a coding frame was developed and the transcripts were coded by both researchers. During this process, the coding frame was amended to take account of new themes and the transcripts were then re-read according to the new structure. This process was used to develop categories, which were then conceptualised into broad themes after further discussion. The themes were categorised into five areas: project set-up; the process of organising mentors for offenders; the process of providing mentoring for offenders; outcomes; and roll-out.

Analysis of quantitative data involved examining the profiles of offenders and the support they received. Further analysis was carried out to look at specific sub-sets of offenders including those:

- serving short sentences;
- who were/were not matched with a mentor;
- who completed/disengaged from mentoring.

This involved running queries in Microsoft Access and Excel to extract and compare information relating to the profiles and support received by these different sub-sets of offenders.

## Ethics

The evaluators adhere to the United Kingdom Evaluation Society's Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation and, for this particular evaluation, also took account of the ethical guidelines provided by the British Society of Criminology.

All those who were invited to take part in this evaluation were contacted initially by project staff and were given detailed information about the purpose of the evaluation and the expectations of them should they agree to be involved. All participants gave informed consent verbally (i.e. the nature and terms of their participation in the evaluation were explained to them). In addition, offenders were provided with an information sheet which set out the purpose of the interview and issues around confidentiality (see Appendix 3). Interviewers repeated this information at the start of each interview and explained to

interviewees that they were free to terminate the interview at any time, withdraw a comment or choose not to answer questions if they wished. Particular care was taken to ensure that the methods used did not unintentionally discriminate against participants in any way.

All data were anonymised before being securely transferred from the projects to the evaluators who then stored the data, along with data collected through interviews and surveys, in encrypted files.

## Appendix 2: Monitoring tools

### The interview schedule for interviews with offenders

1. How did you first hear about the project?

2. What made you decide to get involved?

3. What (specifically) did you hope they would help you with?

4. Was this the first time you have been in prison?

*[If no]* Were you offered anything like this before? *[If yes]* What? And how useful was it?

5. How long has it been since your release?

6. Did you receive any support from project staff whilst you were in prison?

*[If yes]* What? Was this support useful? *[If yes]* In what way?

7. Did you receive any support from project staff during or after your release?

*[If yes]* What? Was this support useful? *[If yes]* In what way?

8. Have you got a mentor? *[If no, skip to Q16]*

*[If yes]* Did you first meet your mentor before or after your release?

- *[If before]* How long before your release was this?
  - Was that soon enough?
  - Was it useful in terms of helping you prepare for your release?
    - *[If yes]* In what way?
    - *[If no]* What would have been better?
  - Did it make a difference meeting your mentor before you were released?
    - *[If yes]* In what way?
- *[If after]* How long after your release was this?
  - Was that soon enough?
  - Was it useful in terms of helping you cope with your release?
    - *[If yes]* In what way?
    - *[If no]* What would have been better?

9. And what kind of contact have you had with your mentor since your release, e.g. meeting them face to face, talking on the phone, etc? (probe re second and third contacts)

10. What did they help you with?

Was this useful?

- [If yes] In what way?
- [If no] Why not?

Was there anything else you would have liked them to help you with?

11. Overall, do you feel you had enough contact with your mentor? [If no] How much contact would you have liked?

12. And more specifically do you feel you had enough face-to-face contact with them?

13. How did you get on with your mentor?

- What, if anything, did you particularly value about your mentor?
- Was there anything you didn't like about your mentor? [If yes] What?
- Are there any ways in which your mentor could have supported you better?

14. How much difference did your mentor make to your experience of coming out of prison?

15. What if anything was the most important aspect of the support you got from your mentor?

*Skip to Q17*

16. [If didn't have a mentor]

Would you have liked a mentor?

- [If yes] Do you know why you weren't given a mentor? What would you have liked them to help you with?
- [If no] Why didn't you want a mentor?

17. Do you think things would have been different for you if you hadn't had this support? How?

18. Finally, would you recommend this kind of project to other people leaving prison?

- [If yes] Why?
- [If no] Why not?

19. Is there anything else you would like to say before we end this interview?

### **Interviews with statutory partners**

1. Overall, what has been your experience of being involved with/working on this project? What has worked particularly well? What has been difficult?

2. What has been your experience of working with Sefton CVS/Catch22?

3. What has been the impact on you and your colleagues, both positive and negative, in terms of being involved with this project?

4a. Do you think the project has made a difference?

[If yes] What in particular do you think has contributed to this?

[If no] Why not? What else could have been done?

5. Would you be keen to see this project continue?

6. Do you think there are any lessons we can learn from your experience of being involved?

7. If this were to roll out nationally, what aspects of this model would you keep and what would you change?

8. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of being involved with this project?

### **Interviews with Catch22's mentoring providers**

1a. Looking back over the last 18 months, what has been your experience of being involved with the Informal Mentoring Project?

1b. What has worked best?

1c. What has been difficult?

1d. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of this kind of project?

2. And what was your experience of working with Catch22?

3a. Thinking specifically about recruiting, training and supporting mentors, what do you feel has worked best?

3b. And what has been difficult?

3c. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of working with mentors?

4a. And in terms of organising mentoring for offenders (e.g. matching, supporting mentoring relationships, managing safety issues), what has worked best?

4b. And what has been difficult?

4c. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of organising mentoring for offenders?

5. From your organisation's point of view, what can we learn about the resources that you have needed to commit to this project?

6. If this were to be rolled out nationally, what aspects of Catch22's mentoring model would you keep and what would you change?

7. Is there anything else that you think should be reflected in the final evaluation of the project?

## Group interview with project staff

1. How have things been going since we last met?
2. Have you made any changes to your delivery model in the last six months? [*If yes*] What are these and why?
- 3a. Looking back over the last 18 months, what would you say has worked best in terms of your work with the prison?
- 3b. And what has been difficult?
- 3c. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of working with prisons?
- 4a. [*Catch22 only*] Thinking now about your work with mentoring providers, what would you say worked best in terms of working with mentoring providers?
- 4b. And what has been difficult?
- 4c. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of working with mentoring providers?
- 5a. Thinking about recruiting, training and supporting mentors, what worked best?
- 5b. And what has been difficult?
- 5c. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of working with mentors?
- 6a. And in terms of organising mentoring for offenders (e.g. matching, supporting mentoring relationships, managing safety issues), what worked best?
- 6b. And what has been difficult?
- 6c. And what are the key lessons for future projects in terms of organising mentoring for offenders?
7. From your organisation's point of view, what can we learn about the resources and infrastructure that are required to set up and run a project like this?
8. If this were to be rolled out nationally, what aspects of your model would you keep and what would you change?
9. Is there anything else that you think should be reflected in the final evaluation of the project?

### Online mentor survey

1. How long have you been involved as a mentor for the Informal Mentoring Project?
2. *[Catch22 only]* Which organisation are you a mentor with?
3. Have you mentored any offenders with the Informal Mentoring Project?
  - a. If yes, how many offenders have you mentored?
    - i. How many of these were successfully completed (i.e. mutually agreed, positive end to mentoring relationship)?
    - ii. If not successfully completed, why was that?
  - b. If no, why was that?
4. Overall, would you describe your experience of mentoring as positive/negative/mixed?
  - a. Please explain.
5. Overall, did you feel you had enough training to fulfil your role as a mentor?
  - a. If yes, what in particular did you value?
  - b. If no, what would you have liked?
6. Overall, did you feel you had enough support in your role as a mentor?
  - a. If yes, what in particular did you value?
  - b. If no, what would you have liked?
7. What do you think are the key factors in successfully mentoring offenders on release from prison?
8. If this project were to be continued, is there anything that you think should be changed?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience of being involved in this project?
10. Are you willing to be interviewed? If yes, please provide details.

### Interview schedule for mentors

1. How many of the mentoring relationships you have been involved with have been successfully completed?
2. *[If not many mentored and been a mentor for a while]* You said you've mentored x offenders since you got involved with the project – is there a reason you haven't mentored more than that?
3. Can you tell me a bit more about how you feel the mentoring support helped offenders?
4. What kind of contact have you had with offenders? What has that involved?
5. *Probe what they enjoyed most about the mentoring.*
6. Overall, did you feel you had enough training to fulfil your role as a mentor?
7. What do you feel are the key ingredients that enable this kind of mentoring to work?
8. *[If they suggested changes to the project in their response to the online survey]* Can you tell me a bit more about why you suggested this?

*[Peer mentors only]*

9. How did you hear about the project?

10. What made you decide to get involved?

11. Do you feel it made a difference to the offenders you have mentored that you were a peer mentor?

## Weekly activity recording sheet

Name of staff member:

Role in relation to mentoring project:

Location of workplace:

Email address:

Monday's date in this week:

Type of activity	Work related to named specific individual offenders	Any other work
Addressing needs of offenders		
Administration		
Training (organising/delivering, etc.)		
Training (receiving)		
Supervision of staff		
Receiving supervision		
Travel		
Meetings		
Sickness, leave or medical appointments		
Anything else		

## Appendix 3:

# Information sheet and consent form for offenders

### Information sheet

M & E Consulting, a research consultancy, has been asked to carry out an evaluation of the Informal Mentoring Project. The evaluation will look at how the project is run and how well it is delivering its services. As part of this evaluation, M & E Consulting will be carrying out telephone interviews with people who have taken part in the project. This information sheet answers some of the questions that are most often asked by those thinking of taking part in an evaluation.

#### ***Why have I been contacted?***

- We are hoping to interview people from a range of backgrounds in order to get a broad view of people's experiences of receiving mentoring support.
- We have therefore selected people on the basis of their age, gender, ethnicity and length of sentence.
- You have been randomly selected on these criteria only.

#### ***Do I have to take part in this evaluation?***

- Not at all. Taking part in this evaluation is completely voluntary and will not affect any services that you receive.
- The organisation that put you in touch with your mentor will contact you to check whether you are happy to be interviewed.

#### ***What if I decide not to take part?***

- If you do not wish to take part, simply tell them and you will not be contacted about this again.

#### ***What happens if I decide to take part?***

- If you are happy to be interviewed, the organisation that put you in touch with your mentor will check with you what phone number to call you on and when it is best for us to call you.
- We will only contact you if you have agreed for your contact details to be shared with us.
- The interview will be carried out at a time of your choice and will last no more than 20 minutes.

***What happens if someone else answers the phone instead of me?***

- We will only contact you on the telephone number you provide. If someone else answers the phone instead of you, we will be discreet. This means that if you are not available, we will not leave our name or the reason for our call. However, we will try calling you again at another time.

***What if I can't speak to you when you call me?***

- We understand that it is not always possible to speak to us at the time arranged. If that is the case, we will arrange with you to call again at a time that is convenient to you.

***What if I change my mind about speaking to you?***

- We will respect your wishes. You have the right to change your mind at any point without having to give any reasons.
- You can ask us to stop the interview at any point or refuse to answer individual questions that we ask you.

***What are you going to ask me and will you be writing this down?***

- We will be asking you what you thought of the mentoring support you received and whether you feel it made a difference to you.
- At the start of the interview, we will ask you to confirm that you are happy for us to record the interview. We would like to record the interview because we want to make sure that we represent your views accurately. It can be difficult for us to listen to what you are saying whilst trying to write it down at the same time. However, if you do not wish us to record the interview using recording equipment, we are very happy to write down what you say to us.

***What are you going to do with the information I give you?***

- The interview is confidential. This means we will not pass on this information to anyone else. However, if you tell us about any criminal activity you have been involved in, we will be obliged to report it.
- We will use the information you give us along with what other people tell us to report on how the Informal Mentoring Project is run and how well it is delivering its services.
- All information will be held securely. The transcripts of our interviews will not have any personal details (e.g. your name) on them.
- All information and recordings will be destroyed after six months.
- We may use some of what you say as direct quotes in our report, however we will not use your name or any other identifiable details.

**Consent form**

**Please tick box**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this evaluation and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree to take part in the above evaluation.

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

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Name of participant

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Date

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Signature