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for Education

Evaluation of the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring Programme

Year 2 Report July 2026

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Executive summary

Introduction

In late 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) provided funding to 50 projects across 45 local authorities in England to deliver the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring (FFBM) programme. The Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme aimed to help address the negative outcomes experienced by some children in care and care leavers associated with a lack of trusting, stable relationships and/or a support network by providing opportunities for them to build positive and supportive networks.

Local authorities had to apply to be part of the programme. Funding criteria required local authorities to deliver a Family Finding and/or Befriending and Mentoring project as a new provision, or where there was an existing provision, to expand it to a new cohort of children or young people. Year 1 of the programme ran from December 2023 to March 2025. In late March 2025, DfE announced programme funding continuation for a further year for 46 projects across 44 local authorities to continue to deliver their projects (known as Year 2). Four local authorities decided not to continue their project into Year 2.¹ In Year 2, 25 Family Finding and 21 Befriending and Mentoring projects were funded across individual or consortia of local authorities.

Evaluation and methodological overview

In spring 2024, DfE commissioned Ecorys and Coram to evaluate the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme. The evaluation was split into 2 stages. Stage 1 (April 2024 to March 2025 and later extended to March 2026) sought to assess the early implementation of the programme, identify early evidence of outcomes and value for money. Findings from the Year 1 programme evaluation were reported in the Year 1 early findings report.² To build on these findings, in Year 2, evaluation activities involved collecting and analysing projects' Monitoring Information (MI) data, a (new) pre- and post-Children and Young People Survey, and a survey with Project Leads. For Befriending and Mentoring projects, additional data collection included focus groups with project leads and mentors, and qualitative fieldwork with children and young people. It is important to note that the evaluation does not include a full impact evaluation of the programme, and there are some limitations which should be considered when reading this report. Limitations include small sample sizes, missing or inaccurate MI data, the lack of availability of central programme costs, and some of the assumptions in the breakeven analysis.

¹ Reasons for not continuing included a limited take up of support in Year 1, and lack of lead in time to allow for commissioning processes.

² The Year 1 evaluation report can be found here: [Evaluation of the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring programme: year 1 early findings report](#)

Key findings: Family Finding

Projects' design, delivery and reach

Family Finding projects typically followed the established Lifelong Links model, and projects were mostly delivered in-house by the local authority, drawing on resources and expertise from the Family Rights Group in some way. Most projects took a universal approach, offering support to different groups of children and young people. A smaller number of projects took a more targeted approach and sought to work with specific sub-cohorts of children in care or care leavers, typically targeting multiple cohorts. Most projects that adopted a targeted approach went on to work with those target cohorts to some extent. Across projects, irrespective of the targeted or universal recruitment design, project leads reported their projects had engaged children and young people across a range of sub-groups.

Project design varied, however, some common trends included:

- support was largely delivered either face to face or with a combination of face to face and online, and most frequently included meeting with children and young people once per week
- support typically ranged from 4 to 6 months or 7 to 12 months
- in most projects, children and young people were encouraged to maintain contact with the people they connected with after project support had finished, although further practical support with this was rarely offered

Close working and integration with local authorities and other services was a key enabler to delivery, as well as the ability to be flexible to meet the needs of children and young people. Challenges were reported around the fluctuating nature of children and young people's engagement with projects, within a context of wider challenging and sometimes chaotic individual circumstances. Having dedicated DfE funding to support the projects was a key enabler to delivery, but late notice of funding extensions led to challenges around staffing and continuity of project delivery for children and young people.

Overall, 1,202 children and young people were referred to Family Finding projects in Year 1, and 693 were referred in Year 2. Of those, 26% had completed the programme at the time of the latest MI submission used in this report. Of the children and young people who were referred to Family Finding projects:

- 61% were in care, and 39% were care leavers
- the average age was 16 years

- 45% attended school while 23% were not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Early outcomes

The evaluation found positive changes in the number of connections/relationships children and young people had with important people in their lives. This increased on average by 2.2 after engaging with a Family Finding project, which was a statistically significant increase. Evidence also indicated that the longer children and young people participated in Family Finding projects, the more opportunities they had to connect with more people in their lives.

Of those receiving Family Finding support, children and young people (re)connected with immediate and wider family, professionals (including teachers and social workers), friends, foster families and others. Three-fifths (61%, n=1,313) of participating children and young people (re)connected with at least one connection, while 39% (n=1,313) had made no (re)connections at the time of the MI data collection.

There were inconclusive findings across children and young people's outcomes when comparing baseline and endline surveys – no statistically significant differences were detected. Key outcomes were tested across thematic areas such as wellbeing, relationships, feelings of loneliness, sense of identity and belonging, sense of community, as well as wider outcomes. However, it remains possible that genuine changes in wellbeing occurred for children and young people but were not evident statistically given the small sample size.

Economic evaluation

The evaluation findings suggest that there was likely an underspend for Family Finding projects for the 2025/2026 financial year, although this may be overestimated due to missing Q4 data at the time of reporting.

The average cost per supported child and young person was £3,459, and data tentatively suggested that local authorities with smaller numbers of children and young people tended to report higher costs per child and young person.

The estimated value from improved relationships was not enough for the projects to be considered value for money, compared to the £3,459 cost per child/young person. However, value for money may be achieved if well-being or loneliness improvements are realised over time.

Key findings: Befriending and Mentoring

Projects' design, delivery and reach

Befriending and Mentoring projects followed a range of different models and approaches, depending on the target cohort of children and young people and the projects' intended outcomes. Most projects took a targeted approach, focusing on working with particular sub-cohorts of care-experienced children and young people; some of which proved harder to engage. Most projects that took a targeted approach went on to work with those target cohorts to some extent.

Project design varied, however some common trends included:

- support through the projects was largely delivered either face to face or with a combination of face to face and online, and typically included meeting with children and young people once per week
- most projects adopted blended approaches to supporting children and young people by combining one-to-one and group activities
- support typically ranged from 4 months to a year
- mentors were typically matched with one child or young person - the most common criterion for matching was shared interests between mentors and mentees, something which young people also highlighted as an important factor for matching
- sustained engagement was supported by trust based, flexible and tailored approaches, including careful matching and regular communication between mentors and mentees
- the ways projects determined when support ended varied; the majority of Project Lead Survey respondents indicated that projects took a mentee-led approach to ending support, which happened either when outcomes had been reached or when the mentee chose to end support

Close working and integration with local authorities and other services was a key enabler to delivery, as well as the ability to be flexible to meet the needs of children and young people. Having dedicated DfE funding to support the projects was a key enabler to delivery, but late notice of funding extensions led to similar challenges as were reported for Family Finding.

Overall, 987 children and young people were referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects in Year 1, and 604 were referred in Year 2. Of those, around 1 in 10 had completed the programme at the time of the latest MI submission used in this report. Withdrawal rates increased in Year 2, particularly among older young people, care leavers

and those not in education, employment or training, reflecting the wider instability in young people's lives. Of the children and young people who were referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects:

- more than half were care leavers (56%)
- 44% were children in care
- the average age was 18 years

Early outcomes

The evaluation found that there was an increase in the number of connections/relationships children and young people had with important people in their lives compared with before the Befriending and Mentoring projects started. On average, this was a statistically significant increase of 1.3 connections/relationships.

Given the young person led nature of many projects and the diversity of intended outcomes, not all benefits were expected to be captured by standardised survey measures. However, qualitative evidence suggested that many children and young people benefited from trusted, consistent mentoring relationships, particularly in terms of enhanced confidence, feeling supported, and reduced isolation, even where quantitative changes were not statistically detectable. There was a minor positive difference in children and young people's positivity about their future between baseline and endline survey findings, as well as tentative evidence to suggest that children and young people felt less lonely after taking part in Befriending and Mentoring projects. These findings demonstrate signs of promise. Just 1% of participants felt lonely after taking part in the Befriending and Mentoring programme compared with 17% at baseline.

Other survey findings showed potential improved outcomes at endline including children and young people feeling more settled at home, feeling safer at home, feeling that they belong more in their local area, feeling safer in their local area, having a trusted adult and feeling like they are getting help with their feelings. However, after adjusting for a more stringent statistical significance threshold, these differences were no longer statistically significant, indicating that the findings are not robust.

Economic evaluation

Sixty-three per cent of allocated funds for Befriending and Mentoring projects were spent in the first 3 financial quarters. Given the anticipated Q4 spend, the 2025/26 financial year total is likely to be an underspend. It is anticipated that about 88% of allocated funding will be spent, but this may be overestimated due to missing Q4 data.

The average cost per child or young person supported by Befriending and Mentoring projects was £2,978, and this was largely the same regardless of the number of children and young people reached.

Based on this early evidence, the estimated value from enhanced relationships and reducing loneliness was not sufficient for the projects to be considered value for money, compared to the £2,978 cost per child or young person. However, breakeven analysis suggests projects could represent value for money if wellbeing benefits are realised over time, with most modelled scenarios exceeding costs.

Conclusions

Since 2023, DfE has provided funding to 50 projects across 45 local authorities (in Year 1) and 46 projects across 44 local authorities (in Year 2) in England to deliver the programme. During this time, the programme has reached, engaged and supported a large number of care-experienced children and young people.

Based on evidence from Years 1 and 2, the evaluation concludes that Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects were generally well delivered, relationally strong, and valued by children and young people, although evidence of measurable outcomes and value for money remains early and subject to important limitations.

While the Children and Young People Survey found limited quantitative evidence of intended outcomes being achieved, this may have been due to limitations associated with the small sample sizes. However, Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects supported participating children and young people to increase their number of (re)connections, on average, by 2.2 and 1.3 respectively – these were statistically significant increases. The qualitative evidence gathered through the surveys' free text comments coupled with the qualitative interview data (for Befriending and Mentoring only) highlighted a range of positive benefits for children and young people, for example, supporting confidence, emotional wellbeing and stability for some of those involved in the programme.

Relationships between children and young people and their (re)connections and/or mentors can take time to be identified, developed and become established before some outcomes can be realised. A key strength of project delivery was the ability for projects to be flexible to meet the needs of children and young people based on their current circumstances – this included pausing and restarting support as children and young people required. The young person-focused approach and flexibility deployed by projects is of utmost importance given the range of barriers care-experienced children and young people face in taking up new or continuing to receive support.

While the evaluation found that dedicated funding was a key enabler to delivery, challenges with how the funding was administered to projects led to considerable

disruption across the programme. As such, the evidence suggests that longer-term funded projects could reach and engage a greater number of children and young people and/or enhance the impact of the programme on children's and young people's outcomes across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects.

Findings from this evaluation largely resonate with those from wider evidence in relation to Family Finding projects and Befriending and Mentoring projects, however gaps in evidence remain.

Recommendations

For any similar programmes in future, the DfE should consider committing funding for multiple years to avoid the disruption of short-term funded projects for care-experienced children and young people. Among other things, this would provide more time to better engage (more) children and young people, for developing trusting relationships and to enable the expected longer-term outcomes of the projects to be evaluated to inform future local and national spending decisions.

In addition, the DfE should consider not requiring programmes to be delivered to the end of financial years; this does not fit well with children and young people's lives, particularly those who are in education or training and may be partway through an academic year when the projects may cease.

When evaluating similar programmes in future, evaluators need to be involved during programme design and/or before programme delivery commences to ensure robust data can be collected to help measure the impact of such programmes. A range of quasi-experimental, theory-based, and other evaluation approaches would likely be suitable if evaluators are engaged early. In addition, the DfE should ensure appropriate focus is given to gathering qualitative insights from children and young people themselves, recognising that outcomes may be varied and highly personal and may not necessarily be best captured using standardised outcome measures.

Introduction

Overview of programme

In late 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) provided funding to 50 projects across 45 local authorities in England to deliver the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring (FFBM) programme.

The Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme aimed to help address the negative outcomes experienced by some children in care and care leavers associated with a lack of trusting, stable relationships and/or a support network by providing opportunities for them to build positive and supportive networks. Specifically, the programme sought to:

- help children in care and care leavers to identify and connect with the important people in their lives
- improve their sense of identity and community
- create safe, stable, loving relationships

Primarily, Family Finding (FF) projects aimed to help children in care and care leavers to identify and connect with the important people in their lives, while Befriending and Mentoring (BM) projects focused on establishing new supportive relationships outside of children and young people's existing 'professional' support networks.³

Local authorities had to apply to be part of the programme. Funding criteria required local authorities to deliver a Family Finding and/or Befriending and Mentoring project as a new provision, or where there was an existing provision, to expand it to a new cohort of children or young people. Year 1 ran from December 2023 to March 2025.⁴ In late March 2025, DfE announced programme funding continuation for a further year for 46 projects across 44 local authorities (known as Year 2). All of those involved in Year 2 were continuing projects delivered in Year 1. Four local authorities decided not to continue their project into Year 2.⁵ In Year 2, 25 Family Finding and 21 Befriending and Mentoring projects were funded across individual or consortia of local authorities.

Local authorities could deliver projects in-house or commission third-party providers to deliver the programme on their behalf. The programme was designed with flexibility so that local authorities could determine what provision would best meet the needs of their children and young people. As part of their application to DfE, local authorities had to

³ Throughout this report the term 'mentor' refers to both mentors and befrienders.

⁴ The Year 1 evaluation report can be found here: [Evaluation of the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring programme: year 1 early findings report](#)

⁵ Reasons for not continuing included a limited take up of support in Year 1, and lack of lead in time to allow for commissioning processes.

consider how their provision would meet the specific needs of the cohort of children and/or young people they were targeting. This determined the delivery models, providers and partners that local authorities worked with (for example, where they worked with specialist organisations).

Overview of evaluation

In spring 2024, DfE commissioned Ecorys and Coram to evaluate the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme. With a view to inform future policy and spending decisions, the evaluation aimed to assess the:

- practicability of implementing the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring projects
- impact of Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring projects for helping children in care and care leavers to identify and connect with the important people in their lives, improve their sense of identity and community, and create safe, stable, loving relationships
- value for money of the programme, including a cost-benefit analysis and cost efficiencies analysis to estimate the full social and economic costs and benefits

To meet these original aims, the evaluation was split into 2 stages. Stage 1 (April 2024 to March 2025 and later extended to March 2026) sought to assess the early implementation of the programme, identify early evidence of outcomes and value for money. Stage 2, if commissioned, would assess the impact of the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring models to understand 'what works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how'. Following the Spending Review 2025, DfE decided to reduce the scale of the programme going forward, with the evaluation drawing to a close in March 2026.

As part of Stage 1, the Year 1 (2024/25) evaluation sought to provide a strong grounding for possible future evaluation. This included developing a programme Theory of Change (ToC), an overarching evaluation approach, designing robust research tools, collecting early implementation data, understanding the reported benefits of the programme, and capturing the costs of programme delivery. Findings from Year 1 of the programme and evaluation were reported in the Year 1 early findings report. Based on findings from Year 1, the evaluation in Year 2 sought to:

- pilot taking a pre and post approach to Children and Young People Survey data collection

- fill in gaps in evidence around understanding, specifically, different models of Befriending and Mentoring projects working with care-experienced children and young people

Methodology

The Year 1 early findings report outlined the substantial existing evidence base around Family Finding. Therefore, in Year 2, with direction from DfE, the evaluation focused the process evaluation activities on exploring Befriending and Mentoring projects in greater depth. The evaluation collected data on both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects, but additional (qualitative) data collection activities focused solely on Befriending and Mentoring.

Year 2 evaluation activities consisted of 4 main strands, providing findings on:

- different delivery models being used and how these work in different ways for different cohorts of children and young people
- project implementation exploring operational challenges, solutions and examples of good practice across the different delivery models
- early outcomes of the programme for children and young people involved
- the costs of programme delivery and breakeven analysis

The following section summarises the evaluation approach and its methods. A detailed breakdown of the data sources is presented in Summary of data sources, with a Detailed methodology found in Annexes.

Monitoring information (MI)

Quarterly monitoring data was collected from projects using standardised templates developed by the evaluation team in consultation with local authorities during Year 1. These captured demographic information, engagement and selected outcomes for children and young people, with unique identifiers enabling linkage to survey data. Analysis for this report is based on the most recent MI return (October–December 2025), covering 44 of 46 projects (24 Family Finding and 20 Befriending and Mentoring), and including cumulative data across Years 1 and 2. Quantitative analysis focused on descriptive statistics, with significance testing undertaken where sample sizes allowed.

Table 1 MI sample

Project	Number of CYP	Number of projects
Family Finding	1,977	24
Befriending and Mentoring	1,617	20
Total	3,594 ⁶	44

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

Further details of our approach to the MI data collection can be found in Annex 3 Monitoring information (MI) data collection, cleaning and analysis.

Children and Young People Survey

Children and young people participating in the projects were invited to complete a survey at 2 timepoints (early and later in their engagement). The Year 2 survey, which differed from the Year 1 evaluation survey, was aligned more closely with the intended programme outcomes, while retaining selected items from Coram's Bright Spots surveys.⁷ Further details on the survey design and approach can be found in the annex Children and Young People Survey. Age-appropriate versions of the survey were used for children aged 4 to 7 years, 8 to 11 years and 11 to 17 years, and for care leavers. Limited matched baseline - endline responses constrained the extent of longitudinal analysis. The number of valid (unmatched) responses was:

- 139 baseline (67 Family Finding and 72 Befriending and Mentoring)
- 231 endline (102 for Family Finding and 129 for Befriending and Mentoring)

Although not all survey responses could be retained for statistical analysis, all qualitative responses from children and young people were included in the analysis. Whilst the intention was to match responses for individual children and young people between baseline and endline responses, there were fewer than 20 matched responses for Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring respectively. As such, findings from the analysis of the matched sample have not been included in this report but can be found in the annex Children and Young People Survey.

⁶ This total may include some double counting as a small minority of children and young people have engaged across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects. This combined sample is however not used in any analysis presented in this report.

⁷ More information about the Bright Spots Programme and surveys: [Bright Spots Programme, Coram Voice](#).

Project Lead Survey

An online survey of Project Leads was conducted between September and October 2025 to gather evidence on project delivery, implementation challenges and perceived outcomes. Thirty-four responses were received (74% of funded projects), covering both Family Finding (n=20)⁸ and Befriending and Mentoring (n=15) projects.

Focus groups and children and young people qualitative fieldwork (Befriending and Mentoring projects)

Primary qualitative data collection was conducted in Befriending and Mentoring projects only. This included online focus groups with project staff, volunteers, mentors and befrienders, alongside interviews and participatory workshops with children and young people.

Online focus groups included 5 focus groups with 21 project staff and volunteers from 17 projects, and 6 focus groups with 17 mentors and befrienders from 12 projects. The discussions examined approaches to engaging children and young people, examples of good practice, common challenges, and perceived outcomes. Further details about the approach to focus group sampling and organisation can be found in Annex 3 Focus groups (Befriending and Mentoring).

Children and young people involved in Befriending and Mentoring projects took part in qualitative fieldwork through either one-to-one interviews or participatory online workshops. In total, 9 interviews were conducted with children and young people from 5 local authorities, alongside 2 online workshops with 9 care leavers from 6 local authorities. Overall, participants were drawn from 9 different local authorities.

These methods explored engagement approaches, delivery practice, challenges and perceived impacts. Additional details about these methods, including sampling, can be found in the Detailed methodology in Annex 2.

Analysis of local authority spend data

The economic evaluation analysed local authority financial data drawn from DfE's quarterly monitoring reports, focusing on actual and projected spend and numbers of children and young people reached. Central DfE administration costs were excluded from the programme costs, as these are not routinely calculated.⁹ This means overall programme costs are likely to be slightly underestimated but central costs are small relative to funding provided to local authorities and are unlikely to materially affect value-for-money assessments.

⁸ One response was incomplete.

⁹ Only a small number of staff work on the programme and do not work full-time on the programme, and their involvement fluctuates throughout the delivery cycle, including for commercial and financial staff whose time spent on the programme would be particularly difficult to calculate.

Limitations of the evaluation

There are a number of limitations to the evaluation's analyses which should be considered when reading this report. These are outlined below.

- The evaluation does not include a full impact evaluation of the programme; this report presents an early outcomes assessment of the programme for Year 2.
- It is important to note a potential risk of bias in the MI responses due to the retrospective nature of certain questions related to outcomes. Some of the outcomes relating to before and after programme participation were completed at the same time by the project delivery teams. Results from the MI analysis cannot necessarily be attributed to the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme.
- The MI data does not include data from all local authorities that participated. While the MI covers most projects (44 out of 46), 2 projects were missing from this dataset. However, there were no noticeable commonalities between the projects that did not submit the MI data, suggesting that the submitted data included in this report is broadly representative across the programme. In addition, in some instances, the MI data provided was incomplete or missing. In some cases, this was due to the early phase of the child or young person's engagement (for example, if the MI was completed immediately after referral and some information was not known), or some questions not being relevant for all children and young people for other reasons. Consequently, for some questions, the sample size was reduced. These cases are highlighted in the respective sections, and caution is advised when smaller samples are used as they may not be representative of all local authorities or children and young people taking part.
- The Children and Young People Survey data presented some limitations, mainly due to low responses, especially across younger ages (4 to 7 years). Small samples could mean survey respondents are not entirely representative of the population (children and young people engaging with Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects). This also meant that matched (baseline-endline) samples were smaller, as they were restricted to only those answering both the baseline and the endline survey. This limited the ability to detect statistically significant differences using paired significance tests. Multiple significance tests were conducted for this reason, including independent sample tests keeping all the baseline and endline respondents (see more details in Annex 3 Children and Young People Survey).
- All children and young people who participated in the qualitative interviews and workshops were recruited by project staff. The evaluation team provided clear guidance encouraging the selection of a wide range of children and young people's

experiences to mitigate against selection bias, however it may be likely that those most engaged in the programme or interested in befriending and mentoring agreed to participate in the evaluation. Insights from children and young people who participated were invaluable and resonated with the views of mentors and project leads who were involved in the focus groups. The Children and Young People Survey also provided the opportunity for a wider range of children and young people to share their experiences of the programme with the evaluation team.

- Due to it not being possible to undertake an impact evaluation of the programme, the sample sizes of the survey and qualitative data presented in this report, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the difference the projects made to children and young people.
- The economic evaluation used quarterly financial data, supplemented with MI data for the number of children and young people reached. Both data sources have some level of missingness across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects. While the sample sizes and missing data limitations are reported throughout, caution is required when interpreting findings and conclusions as the actual and anticipated spend amounts are likely to be underestimates. Therefore, while it is likely that both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects are projected to end the financial year with an underspend when comparing the total spend to funding allocated, the amount of underspend is likely to be overestimated.
- Due to the early nature of the outcomes assessment, outcomes are not monetised for a full cost benefit analysis, and a breakeven analysis is presented instead. The analysis is an estimation based on assumptions, so some caution should be applied when interpreting the analysis.

Report structure

The report outlines the findings for Family Finding projects, followed by findings for Befriending and Mentoring projects. Each section focuses on the following key areas:

- Project design, delivery and reach
- Early outcomes
- Economic evaluation

The report then concludes with overarching conclusions and recommendations for across the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme.

Findings: Family Finding

Projects' design, delivery and reach

Key findings

- The majority of Family Finding projects followed the established Lifelong Links Approach, often drawing on guidance and expertise from the Family Rights Group.
- Most projects took a universal approach, offering support to different groups of children and young people. A smaller portion took a more targeted approach, seeking to work with specific sub-cohorts of children in care or care leavers. Most projects that took a targeted approach went on to work with those target cohorts to some extent.
- Support through the projects was largely delivered either face to face or with a combination of face to face and online, and most frequently included meeting with children and young people once per week. Support typically ranged from 4 to 6 months or 7 to 12 months.
- In most projects, children and young people were encouraged to maintain contact with the people they connected with after support finished, although practical support with this was rarely offered.
- Close working and integration with local authorities and other services was seen as a key enabler to delivery, as well as the ability to be flexible to meet the needs of children and young people. Having dedicated DfE funding to support the projects was a key enabler to delivery, but late notice of funding extensions led to challenges.
- According to the MI data, 1,202 children and young people were referred to Family Finding projects in Year 1, and 693 were referred in Year 2. Of those, 26% had completed the programme at the time of the latest MI submission used in this report.
- Three-fifths of children and young people (61%) were in care and 39% were care leavers. The average age of children and young people referred to Family Finding projects was 16 years.

The Year 1 early findings report outlined the substantial existing evidence base around Family Finding – particularly the Lifelong Links model (LLL), which was adopted by most of

the Family Finding funded projects. Therefore, in Year 2, with direction from DfE, the evaluation focused the process evaluation activities on exploring Befriending and Mentoring projects in greater depth. Lighter touch data collection was carried out with Family Finding projects (including MI data, Children and Young People Survey and Project Lead survey). This chapter provides an overview of Family Finding projects' design and delivery, methods of reaching and engaging children and young people, and reflections on the enablers and barriers to delivery.

Project design

The following findings on Family Finding project design are largely drawn from the Project Lead Survey, which received responses from the leads of 20 (of 25) projects.¹⁰

Project model

Across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects, delivery started with recruiting and referring children and young people to the projects. For Family Finding, once children and young people were identified for and/or referred to receive support, project delivery typically followed these steps:

- recruitment and referrals: project was promoted, and children and young people were referred, usually by their social worker or Personal Adviser
- identifying connections: Family Finding coordinators worked with children and young people to identify potential connections
- finding connections: Family Finding coordinators sought to find the people children and young people wanted to connect with and established whether connections could be made
- reuniting connections: Family Finding coordinators arranged for children and young people and new-found connections to meet in a safe environment, for example via a Family Group Conference (FGC)
- planning for the future: a plan for the connections to be involved in the child or young person's life in future was developed collaboratively with all parties

The evaluation team grouped Family Finding projects into 2 typologies: those following the Lifelong Links model (LLL),¹¹ and a much smaller group of projects delivering other models. Most Family Finding projects followed the LLL model in both Year 1 and Year 2 of the programme, although fewer 'other' models were delivered in Year 2. Of the 18 (of 19) Project Lead Survey respondents who indicated their project delivered LLL Family Finding,

¹⁰ One survey respondent discontinued survey completion at an early stage. This means the base size varies for findings presented in this chapter. The base size is included throughout.

¹¹ See more detail about this model here: [What is Lifelong Links? - Family Rights Group](#)

a small proportion reported being accredited¹² (4 of 18), with the majority unaccredited at the time of responding (13 of 18). One Project Lead Survey respondent reported following a different model of Family Finding, which was focused on supporting children to reconnect with family members and potentially transition out of care.

The majority of Family Finding projects were reportedly delivered in-house within the local authority (17 of 20). All of these projects adopted the LLL model. While delivered in-house, many of these local authorities engaged with the Family Rights Group or its resources in some way. Only 3 (of 20) projects were not delivered in-house, including one project that was fully commissioned to a third-party provider and one where a third-party provider supported the local authority team with referrals. One project was delivered by an internal team within the local authority but relied on independent self-employed LLL coordinators.

Project aims and objectives

The Project Lead Survey data showed the Family Finding projects aligned to the overall programme aims (see: Overview of programme) of helping children and young people to identify and connect with important people in their lives (through reconnecting) and creating safe, stable and loving relationships for children in care and care leavers. Unlike Befriending and Mentoring projects, Family Finding projects were less explicitly centred on improving children and young people's sense of identity and community.

Some Project Lead Survey respondents identified broad or vague aims such as 'improve outcomes for young people' without providing specific details of what these outcomes were, and others were more specific about extending support and developing bespoke project implementation plans for different target groups of care-experienced children and young people (for example, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), care leavers in custody, and care-experienced parents).

Project leads were asked to select the 3 most relevant intended outcomes for their project. The following outcomes were most commonly selected by Family Finding Project Lead Survey respondents:

- improved wellbeing
- connecting with people who children and young people have shared memories/histories with
- ensuring children and young people have someone they can talk to

¹² Lifelong Links service accreditation is a means for local authorities to demonstrate that they meet high standards of Lifelong Links practice. More details can be found here: <https://frg.org.uk/lifelong-links/lifelong-links-service-accreditation/>

Target cohorts

Programme funding was intended to focus on developing new provision for reaching new groups of children in care and care leavers. For Family Finding:

- most Project Lead Survey respondents indicated their projects took a universal approach (13 of 19) to recruiting children and young people to their projects
- around a third (6 of 19) adopted a targeted approach, aiming to support specific groups of both children in care and care leavers

Most projects which took a targeted approach were targeting multiple cohorts, with one project targeting a sub-group of children and young people (young parents).

Of the 6 projects adopting a targeted approach, Table A7 (in Annex 3) provides a breakdown of the cohorts targeted and the number of those who went on to work with each target cohort.¹³ It shows that, according to Project Lead Survey respondents, most targeted projects went on to engage the groups they intended to.

Across projects, irrespective of the targeted or universal recruitment design, project leads reported their projects had engaged children and young people across a range of sub-groups. Table 2 shows that most projects worked with a diverse range of children and young people, despite most not being targeted to reach specific groups. This can also be attributed to many children in care and care leavers having multiple, often complex needs, with subgroups not being mutually exclusive.

Table 2 Cohorts supported by Family Finding projects

Target cohort	Projects working with children in care	Projects working with care leavers
UASC	4	9
Those not in education, training or employment (NEET)	14	16
Those with a mental health issue	14	14
Those living in a children's home or supported accommodation	15	13

¹³ Some project leads reported engaging specific cohorts of children and young people despite them not being a target group. These projects are not included in this table.

Target cohort	Projects working with children in care	Projects working with care leavers
Those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)	13	14
Those who have experienced multiple placement moves	16	16
Young parents	4	11
Those involved with the criminal justice system, in custody or working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS)	9	13
Those at risk of exploitation or with repeat missing episodes	16	12
Those living outside of the county/borough which cares for them	16	12
Those with a permanency care plan	14	3
Total¹⁴	18	18

Source: Project Lead Survey (n=19)

Mode, frequency and duration of support

Project Lead Survey respondents reported that the primary mode of support delivered by coordinators to children and young people taking part in Family Finding projects was:

- face-to-face (10 of 19)
- a mix of face-to-face and remote (phone and online) (9 of 19)

When asked about secondary modes of delivery, most project leads reported using additional methods to supplement face-to-face support, including messages (15 of 19), phone calls (14 of 19) and online communication (11 of 19).

Most frequently, Project Lead Survey respondents indicated meeting with children and young people:

- once per week (9 of 19)

¹⁴ One project respectively did not work with children in care or care leavers.

- monthly (4 of 19)
- more than once per week (3 of 19)
- fortnightly (2 of 19)

However, one Project Lead Survey respondent described the frequency of meetings varying by cohort and stage of the LLL process, with more regular meetings at the beginning of the process to build relationships with participating children and young people.

Most Project Lead Survey respondents reported the average planned length of their Family Finding project was either 7 to 12 months (9 of 19) or 4 to 6 months (7 of 19). Only 2 (of 19) projects whose leads responded to the survey were reported to have a longer duration of planned support of over 1 year, with one respondent indicating they were unsure of the average planned length of support. This aligns with the duration of support delivered to children and young people reported through the MI data returns (see Participation and engagement).

Family Finding support typically ended once outcomes for the child or young person had been achieved (14 of 19) or when the child or young person chose to end support (4 of 19). As noted in the Year 1 early findings report, children and young people may choose to end support at various stages of Family Finding such as when reconnections had been identified, when communication had started, or when meetings took place, all of which can be considered positive 'outcomes'.

Once project support stopped, Project Lead Survey respondents indicated that in most cases children and young people were commonly supported to maintain contact with the people they connected with. This was often incorporated into the child or young person's care plan (14 of 19) and reviewed in the care planning process (12 of 19), social workers or Personal Advisers followed up with children and young people (14 of 19) and/or (re)connections (6 of 19). However, echoing frustrations aired by interviewees in the Year 1 early findings evaluation, few projects were reported to take practical steps to provide ongoing support to help children and young people maintain contact with (re)connections. Only a small number of Project Lead Survey respondents reported that practical support, such as financial support or assistance with travel, was provided to children and young people (4 of 19) or (re)connections (3 of 19). Only 1 (of 19) project leads reported that project staff (for example, LLL coordinator) proactively followed up with the (re)connections added to children and young peoples' support plans.

Reflections on delivery

This section outlines project leads' views on Family Finding project delivery in Year 2 of the programme. It is based on the Project Lead Survey results which asked one named

contact from each project to reflect on the delivery of each project, achieving 19 responses. Findings are triangulated with evidence from Year 1 of the evaluation where relevant.

Enablers to Family Finding project delivery

Figure A3 (in Annex 4) illustrates Project Lead Survey findings on the enablers to project delivery. The most commonly reported enablers were:

- dedicated funding from DfE (19 of 19), as one project lead explained:

The funding received from the DfE has been the cornerstone of developing the Lifelong Links service within [local authority], without which the work simply would not be possible. In a context where local authorities are currently facing increasing pressure to make substantial budget savings, this financial support has been crucial in enabling us to maintain and expand our vital services and recruit necessary staff to carry out the work. – *Project lead (survey respondent)*

- working with wider children's social care and leaving care teams within the local authority (19 of 19)
- relationships with children and young people and the flexible approach taken to meeting their needs (19 of 19)
- alignment with local authority strategic priorities (19 of 19), such as LLL complementing existing interventions such as FGC and Reducing Parental Conflict¹⁵, as one project lead wrote:

Multi-agency collaboration has been key, with input from social care, education, and fostering services. – *Project lead (survey respondent)*

- access to resources, systems and information within the local authority (19 of 19)
- senior leadership buy-in (18 of 19)
- relationships with wider partner organisations (17 of 19)
- third party support, knowledge and expertise (17 of 19). For example, open text comments showed that working with the FRG to deliver LLL was highly valued, as one respondent wrote:

¹⁵ More information about the Reducing Parental Conflict programme can be found here: [Reducing Parental Conflict - Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/programmes/reducing-parental-conflict)

Support from the wider Lifelong Links community and practice advisors from Family Rights Group – it's an incredibly supportive organisation. – *Project Lead Survey respondent*

- support from DfE was also deemed helpful by 17 of 19 survey respondents

Barriers to Family Finding project delivery

Project Lead Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the challenges to delivering their project (see Figure A4).

The most commonly reported barrier to delivery was the uncertainty of future funding available from DfE, reported by 17 of 19 Project Lead Survey respondents. Several project leads provided open text survey responses highlighting the challenges associated with the late funding decision made by DfE at the end of Year 1 delivery. This had caused some projects to end support for the children and young people they worked with, and meant projects were unable to confirm what future support would look like for those who had benefitted from the project, such as ongoing reviews and proactive check-ins with children and young people.

Because of the late notification of funding for this [2025-2026] financial year, it has been necessary to re-establish the programme and gain the confidence of [local authority] teams. – *Project Lead Survey respondent*

Additionally, due to the one-year funding rounds, project leads sometimes employed staff on temporary contracts, which had increased the management and HR time and negatively affected staff morale due to a lack of job security. Just under half of Project Lead Survey respondents (9 of 19) indicated that staffing and volunteer recruitment/retention had been a barrier for their project.

Other barriers commonly reported by Project Lead Survey respondents related to reaching and engaging children and young people in the projects, including:

- challenges associated with the fluctuating nature of children and young people's engagement, within a context of wider challenging and sometimes chaotic individual circumstances¹⁶
 - children and young people pausing or withdrawing from the project (18 of 19)
- wider challenges or instability in children and young people's lives, such as mental health challenges, placement moves, or disruption to employment, education or training (16 of 19)

¹⁶ These trends echo findings in the Year 1 evaluation report and are explored further in the following section on Reach and engagement

- engaging children and young people (13 of 19)
- specifically engaging target cohorts of children and young people (12 of 19)
- getting suitable referrals of children and young people (11 of 19) in the first instance suggesting that challenges project stakeholders highlighted in the first year of delivery about receiving unsuitable referrals were not entirely resolved

Additionally, most Project Lead Survey respondents reported their project (16 of 19) faced challenges in identifying or engaging connections 'to some extent', although none reported this as a barrier 'to a great extent'. These findings are explored further in the following section on Reach and engagement.

Reach and engagement

Project referrals

According to the MI data, 1,202 children and young people were referred to Family Finding projects in Year 1, and 693 were referred in Year 2 (a total of N=1,895 children and young people¹⁷). The MI data allowed us to understand the demographic characteristics of children and young people referred to the Family Finding projects, across both Year 1 and Year 2:

- three-fifths of children and young people (61%) were in care and 39% were care leavers
- the average age of children and young people referred to Family Finding projects was 16 years with:
 - 11% aged under 10 years
 - 25% aged 11 to 15 years
 - 31% aged 16 to 18 years
 - 33% aged 19 years and over
- there were slightly more males (51%) than females (48%) participating; 1% of participants were identified as 'other'

¹⁷ All numbers were calculated based on valid dates of referral and dates of support started, as recorded in MI returns. In some cases, information was missing or invalid (for example, dates before 21/11/2023 or after 16/02/2026), which means this does not cover all children and young people recorded in the MI data (N=1,977).

- more than two-thirds of children and young people identified as White (69%) with 31% from all other ethnic groups combined
- 45% of children and young people were attending school, while 23% were not in education, employment or training (NEET); 16% were in further education, 17% were employed, 5% were in higher education, and 4% were in other employment/training

Further details about the demographic characteristics of children and young people referred to Family Finding projects are available in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of all children and young people participating in Family Finding projects

Characteristic	n	Mean/ Percentage
Age group (years)		16 years
Under 10	210	11%
11 to 15	502	25%
16 to 18	606	31%
19+	654	33%
Total (N)	1972	
Sex		
Male	1004	51%
Female	950	48%
Other	18	1%
Total (N)	1972	
Ethnicity		
White	1366	69%
Ethnic minority background	293	15%
Mixed or multiple ethnic background	200	10%
Other ethnic background	114	6%
Total (N)	1973	
Education, Employment and Training		
Attending school (4 to 16 years)	812	45%
Not in education, employment, or training	413	23%
Further education (age 16+)	292	16%
Employed	122	7%
Higher education (age 18+)	96	5%
Other training (18+)	57	3%
Other EET	<5	<1%
Total (N)	1794	
Care status		
In care	1209	61%

Care leaver	760	39%
Total (N)	1969	

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

The MI data also explored the number of placements/housing arrangements children and young people involved in Family Finding projects had in the last 12 months. Data showed:

- the average number of changes to placements/housing arrangements children and young people experienced in the past 12 months was 1.7, ranging from 1 to 7 or more. Most children and young people stayed in one placement/housing arrangement in the previous 12 months (57%)
- more than a quarter of children and young people had experienced living in 2 placements in the previous 12 months (29%). A small proportion of children and young people experienced living in 3 or more placements/housing arrangements in the previous 12 months (8%), with 1% experiencing 7 or more

It is worth noting that the demographic composition of children and young people engaging with Family Finding projects has not changed much over time. The above findings align well with the demographic characteristics reported at the time of the Year 1 early findings report.

Across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring, projects typically used a referral approach to identify and reach children and young people to participate. Further details about referrals, including barriers and enablers to generating suitable referrals, are detailed in the Year 1 early findings report. No further evidence was gathered in Year 2.

Participation and engagement

Based on the MI data, the following section sets out the extent to which children and young people took up Family Finding support after being referred to a project, and what that support looked like for those who were engaged.

Overall, of children and young people who were referred:

- the vast majority participated¹⁸ in Family Finding projects (88%)
- 12% did not participate (9% had been referred to the programme but had not started yet, while 3% had not engaged)

¹⁸ Participated=all categories except “not engaged” and “referred but not started yet” – started receiving support, paused, withdrawn, paused but re-started etc.

- more than a third (37%) of children and young people had started Family Finding projects and were receiving support at the time of the latest MI return (up to January 2026)

Once children and young people were referred, they typically waited an average of 35 days (approximately a month) between the referral and the start of support.¹⁹ This varied substantially between individual children and young people, with a range from 0 days (the same day) to 504 days. The majority of children and young people (67%) waited up to 30 days, while almost all children and young people waited up to 180 days (97%, N=1,558). There were very few instances (the remaining 3%) where children and young people waited for support to start for longer than 180 days.

Additional qualitative feedback collected through the MI template provided insights into why some children and young people had been referred but had not started receiving support. Reasons included delays and pauses due to mental health and wellbeing issues, therapy sessions, bereavement and other family circumstances, children and young people not wanting to engage/withdrawing from programme, placement move/breakdowns, availability of family, availability of coordinator, not the right moment for that child or young person to be involved, location and moving locations causing delays, incarceration, and other external factors.

Based on the MI data, 26% had completed the programme at the time of the latest MI return. This was notably higher compared to the end of Year 1 (11%, as reported in the Year 1 early findings report). The true proportion of those completing the programme may have been higher in reality, as in both Year 1 and Year 2 evaluation reports, data from the October-December quarter of the previous year were used as the latest available MI data. However, there were still around 3 months of delivery left. This suggests that more children and young people may have completed the programme by the end of each year, although this could not be captured in this evaluation due to the timing of the analysis and reporting.

As described in Project design the intended duration of support of Family Finding projects ranged from several months to 2 years. In the Year 1 early findings report, the qualitative data showed there were some delays in setting up and delivering projects, which likely explained why the proportion of children and young people who had completed Family Finding projects was low in Year 1.

Less than a quarter of children and young people (22%) withdrew from Family Finding projects, which was slightly higher than previous end of Year 1 results (17%). Reasons for children and young people withdrawing from Family Finding projects provided by project staff were often similar to reasons provided for children and young people not starting

¹⁹ Any referral dates before 21/11/2023 were considered invalid and were removed from the data, as no referrals were expected before this date. Dates after 16/02/2026 were also removed, as this would fall after the last possible submission of MI returns.

support. These included children and young people choosing not to take up the support, not being able to engage the child or young person, the identified network not wanting to connect, bereavement and other family circumstances, mental health and wellbeing challenges, moving out of area, incarceration, and deemed not suitable/not the right time to engage.

It is noteworthy that a small number (1%, n=22) of children and young people re-engaged in support after withdrawing, thus illustrating the benefit of having an 'open door' and re-offering support to children and young people.

Table 4: Status of engagement with the Family Finding projects

Engagement status	n	Percent
Referred to programme but not started yet	171	9%
Started programme and receiving support	731	37%
Withdrawn from programme	424	22%
Previously withdrawn but restarted	22	1%
Participation paused	56	3%
Not engaged	57	3%
Completed programme	502	26%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data
N=1,963

Analysis of the MI data also showed the proportions of children and young people who had progressed through each Family Finding support milestone (N=1,788):²⁰

- 14% of children and young people had not yet participated
- 15% had initially participated in the programme
- 16% had started identifying potential connections

²⁰ This data represents the furthest point in the programme reached by the child or young person, regardless of their current engagement. For example, a child or young person who began receiving support and had started to identify potential connections but had since withdrawn would have their status as 'withdrawn' on the latest MI data, and progress as 'started identifying potential connections'. As a result, the figures relating to progress may not directly correlate with current status.

- a small proportion (7%) had identified connections but decided not to go further at this stage
- over one-third of children and young people (36%) had engaged with connections through the project (this was higher than the 23% reported in the Year 1 early findings report)

It is worth noting that the above percentages showing progression through milestones cannot be directly compared to the percentages showing status of engagement (as shown in Table 4). Percentages showing progression were based on a smaller sample (N=1,788) and likely reflect children and young people at further stages of 'engagement'.

In line with the intended duration set out in Mode, frequency and duration of support, the average duration of support for children and young people in the programme²¹ was 198 days (more than 6 months), although this ranged a great deal from 0 (for example, where children and young people began support but then did not engage) to 702 days. These differences were explored in the Year 1 early findings report, which highlighted how support usually took place over many weeks and that this could vary depending on the needs of the child or young person. More than half of children and young people (54%) experienced up to 180 days of support, while a third (33%) experienced between 6 months to a year of support (180 to 365 days), and 13% experienced more than a year of support (N=799).

Breakdown by year

According to the MI data, there were 1,202 children and young people referred to Family Finding projects in Year 1, and 693 referred in Year 2 (out of a total N=1,895 children and young people with valid²² referral dates recorded in the MI data). We do not have further insights to explain this difference. Similarly, 1,046 children and young people started receiving support by Family Finding projects in Year 1 and 581 started receiving support in Year 2 (out of a total N=1,627 children and young people with valid start of support dates recorded in the MI data).

²¹ This metric was calculated based on the difference between the date support started and the date support ended. However, there were inconsistencies in the data and so these figures should be taken as a guide only.

²² All numbers in Table 5 and Table 6 were calculated based on valid dates of referral and dates of support started, as recorded in MI returns. In some cases, information was missing or invalid (for example, dates before 21/11/2023 or after 16/02/2026), which means this does not cover all children and young people recorded in the MI data (N=1,977).

Table 5 Number of children and young people referred and supported by Family Finding projects per year

Indicator	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Number of children and young people referred	1,202 (63%)	693 (37%)	1,895
Number of children and young people supported	1,046 (64%)	581 (36%)	1,627

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data. Note: end of Y1: 31/03/2025, start of Y2: 01/05/2025.

As shown in Table 6, most children and young people (63%) were referred and started receiving support in Year 1, with around a third (32%) referred and starting to receive support in Year 2. A small minority of children and young people (4%) were referred in Year 1 but only started receiving support in Year 2 (based on a total of N=1,582 children and young people with valid dates of referral and valid dates of start of support from the MI data).

Table 6 Referrals and start of support in Family Finding projects by year

Children and young people engaging with FF projects	n	percent
Referred and started in Year 1	1,002	63%
Referred in Year 1 but started in Year 2	69	4%
Referred and started in Year 2	511	32%
Total	1,582	100%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data Note: end of Y1: 31/03/2025, start of Y2: 01/05/2025.

Participation in both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring

As expected, most children and young people (around 9 in 10) participated in only a Family Finding project, with a small proportion of children and young people participating in both (4% of those in Family Finding projects were also participating in Befriending and Mentoring projects). There was a small proportion of children and young people (4%) whose participation in other projects was unknown.

Early outcomes

Key findings

- MI analysis showed that the number of connections/relationships with important people in children and young people's lives increased on average by 2.2 after engaging with a Family Finding project; this was a statistically significant increase.
- Of those receiving Family Finding support, children and young people (re)connected with immediate and wider family, professionals (including teachers and social workers), friends, foster families and others.
- There were inconclusive findings across children and young people's outcomes when comparing baseline and endline surveys – no statistically significant differences were detected. Key outcomes were tested across thematic areas such as wellbeing, relationships, feelings of loneliness, sense of identity and belonging, sense of community, as well as wider outcomes. Survey sample sizes were very small, likely affecting the ability to detect changes.

This section provides insights into how children and young people may have benefitted from Family Finding projects, in relation to the intended outcome areas set out in the Theories of Change (ToCs). Findings are based on the MI data (as reported by project staff) and the Children and Young People's Survey. Further qualitative insights into the reported benefits of Family Finding projects can be found in the Year 1 early findings report.

The data below provides insights into Family Finding projects in relation to the key outcome areas set out in the ToC (subject to the limitations set out in Limitations of the evaluation; Annex 3 Monitoring information (MI) data collection, cleaning and analysis and Annex 3: Limitations of the MI data). Throughout this section, Children and Young People Survey results are reported in brackets as (baseline% - endline%).

Enhanced relationships and networks

The following section draws on findings from MI data and the Children and Young People's Survey.

(Re)connections with important people in their lives

MI analysis showed that the number of connections/relationships with important people in children and young people's lives increased on average by 2.2 after engaging with a Family Finding project, which was a statistically significant increase.

Table 7: Average number of connections/relationships at the start and after engaging with the Family Finding programme

Connections	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Before	3.6	3.8	0	35
After	5.8	5.3	0	38
Difference	2.2*			

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

N=991 (=sub-sample of only those who have already participated with FF projects)²³

“*” means a statistically significant difference at the 5% level or lower

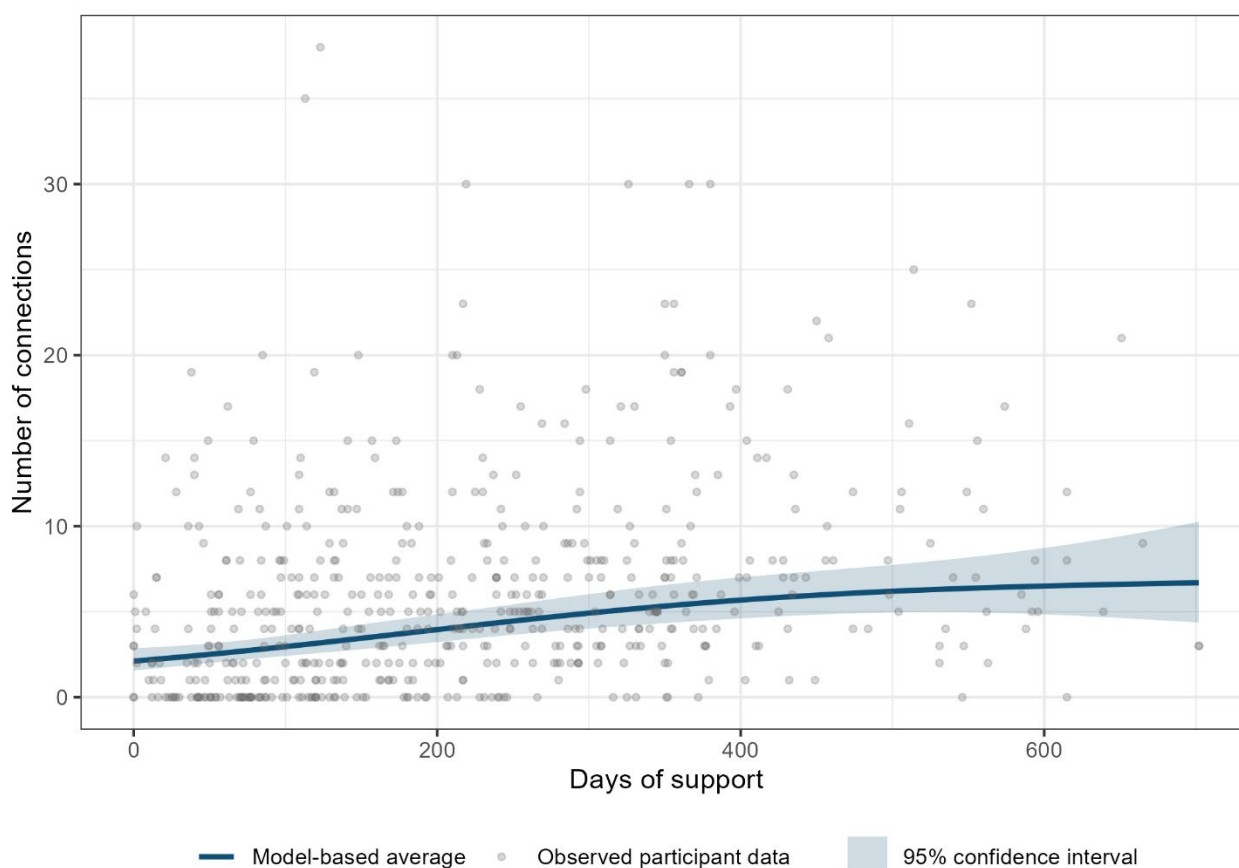
This difference increased over time – in the Year 1 early findings report, this was on average 1.8 connections. This could suggest that the longer children and young people participated in Family Finding projects, the more opportunities they had to connect with more important people in their lives.

Further analysis of the data reinforces this finding, as the data suggested there is a positive association²⁴ between the duration of support and the number of connections for children and young people after engaging with Family Finding projects. The predicted average number of connections increased with programme duration. For example, an average of 2.3 connections was estimated at 30 days of support, 2.9 estimated at 3 months (90 days), 3.7 estimated at 6 months (180 days), and 5.4 estimated in a year (360 days). On average, an additional 30 days of support was associated with +0.38 connections. The figure below demonstrates the relationship between the number of connections after engaging with Family Finding projects and the duration of support in days.

²³ This was defined based on their current programme status, as provided in the MI data. Children and young people with a status of “not engaged” or “referred to programme but not started yet” were excluded, therefore producing a sample of those that have already engaged with the programme in some form (started the programme, started but paused, started but withdrawn, previously withdrawn but restarted, and completed the programme).

²⁴ Tested with a Negative Binomial Generalised Linear Mixed-effects Model (GLMM), adjusting for local authority–level variation to account for clustering of participants within LAs/projects, adjusting for baseline connections to account for pre-existing differences, and using cubic splines to allow for non-linear dose-response relationship (for example, capturing diminishing returns at larger durations).

Figure 1 Dose-response analysis: Post-connections vs days of support in Family Finding projects



Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

N=532 (=sub-sample of those participated in FF projects and with available data on duration of support)

Three-fifths (61%, n=1,313) of participating children and young people (re)connected with at least one connection, while 39% (n=1,313) had made no (re)connections at the time of the MI data collection.²⁵ Among children and young people who made (re)connections through Family Finding projects, their (re)connections were with at least one of the following groups: family, friends, foster families, professionals, or other important people. This varied from (re)connecting with 1 to all 6 groups. As outlined in Table 8, analysis showed that of participating children and young people:

- over a third had (re)connected with their immediate family, including stepfamily (35%)
- over a third had (re)connected with professionals, including teachers and social workers (35%)

²⁵ As those “participating” includes children and young people at various stages of engagement with the programme, it is likely that some may continue to forge (re)connections in the future.

- over a quarter (27%) of children and young people (re)connected with their wider family, including stepfamily
- a fifth (21%) of children and young people (re)connected with other important people in their lives
- around a sixth of children and young people (re)connected with their friends (16%) and foster family (17%)

Table 8: Types of connections/reconnections made through Family Finding projects

Types of connections/reconnections	N	n Connected/ Reconnected	Percent
Immediate family, including stepfamily	1285	446	35%
Wider family, including stepfamily	1245	335	27%
Friends	1242	202	16%
Foster family	1216	207	17%
Professionals, including teachers and social workers	1248	435	35%
Other important people in their lives	1210	256	21%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

Note: N=sample size, n=frequency

Family Finding Lifelong Links (LLL) outcomes

Family Finding projects that were following the LLL model specifically were asked to provide information on key outcomes that the LLL approach routinely collects from children and young people.²⁶ These outcomes related to 4 key areas: whether children and young people have an increased support network; an increased knowledge of family; a stronger sense of identity; and/or repaired relationships. The samples for this data were smaller (between N=444 and N=530) than the overall sample of MI Family Finding data (N=1,977). Consequently, caution is advised when interpreting the following findings, as they may not apply to all children and young people participating in Family Finding projects. The data showed that (see Table 9):

²⁶ Staff were encouraged to draw on information already captured through the Circles tool, which is completed by children and young people. This was then entered by a professional into the MI template. Further information about this tool can be found here: [Lifelong Links Circles - Family Rights Group](#).

- more than three-quarters (78%) of children and young people feel they have an increased support network
- more than three-quarters (76%) of children and young people have a stronger sense of identity
- over two-thirds (71%) of children and young people feel they have an increased knowledge of their family
- a third (66%) of children and young people feel they have repaired relationships

It is worth noting that all of the above percentages were slightly higher compared to the Year 1 early findings results, suggesting that some children and young people engaging with Family Finding projects may have experienced further improvements in these outcomes during Year 2 (previously 76% reported increased support network, 71% stronger sense of identity, 68% increased knowledge of family, and 54% repaired relationships). Outcomes regarding sense of identity, support networks, and relationships were tested further, comparing baseline and endline Children and Young People Survey results, which found no statistically significant differences (see below relevant sections).

Table 9: Lifelong Links programme outcomes (MI data)

LLL-related outcomes	N	n Reported they experienced this outcome ²⁷	Percent
Increased support network	530	416	78%
Stronger sense of identity	505	386	76%
Increased knowledge of family	479	339	71%
Repaired relationships	444	292	66%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

Note: N=sample size, n=frequency

Relationships and sources of support

As shown by the Children and Young People Survey, most children and young people in the reported:

- having a good friend (88% - 89%), and a trusted adult (89% - 96%) in their lives

²⁷ This was a binary question (yes/no) which was marked by the appropriate adults in each Family Finding project filling out the MI return forms.

- they had someone who listens to them (97% - 93%)
- having someone that tells them they have done well (92% - 96%)
- having someone that believes they will be a success (96% - 91%)

Survey findings were mixed in terms of relationships and whether the child felt the level of contact with their immediate family was right for them. Fewer than half of children and young people reported feeling that contact with either parent (47% - 41%) was at the right level, although contact was more often seen to be right for Mums (41% - 48%) and siblings (34% - 44%) compared to Dads (19% - 11%).

Most children and young people indicated that they sometimes/always worry about their feelings or behaviour (73% - 66%), however they also reported receiving help from an adult on this (89% - 67%). Lastly, a very small minority of children and young people reported receiving no support from anyone in their lives (2% - 4%). There were no statistically significant differences in any of the above questions between baseline and endline surveys (see Table A11 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

The Children and Young People Survey asked a series of qualitative free text questions, offering an opportunity for respondents to share any additional reflections about how much they see their family and important people in their lives, and their thoughts about the Family Finding project. At both baseline and endline, respondents described frustrations with the amount of contact they had with family members and other important people in their lives. For example, one young person mentioned only being able to speak to family on the phone as they were not in the country. Another explained:

[I] see [family] once a week at a contact centre. Would like to see [them] more and go to other places. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

At endline, some respondents described still being unhappy with the current situation or wanting more contact with their family members. However, others were happy with the level of contact and appreciative of the new connections they had made. Children and young people expressed gratefulness and love for the family that they were put in contact with, and happiness with the support from the programme. One young person also mentioned being close to getting into contact with a parent for the first time.

I am about to meet my dad for the first time. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

My auntie is always there for me and I am grateful for her and always will be. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

The project gave me contact to a set of people I thought I had lost and I am beyond overjoyed that I have been afforded the chance to have a relationship with these people again. It is a wonderful project and it can lead to immensely positive life changing events and relationships for people such as myself. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

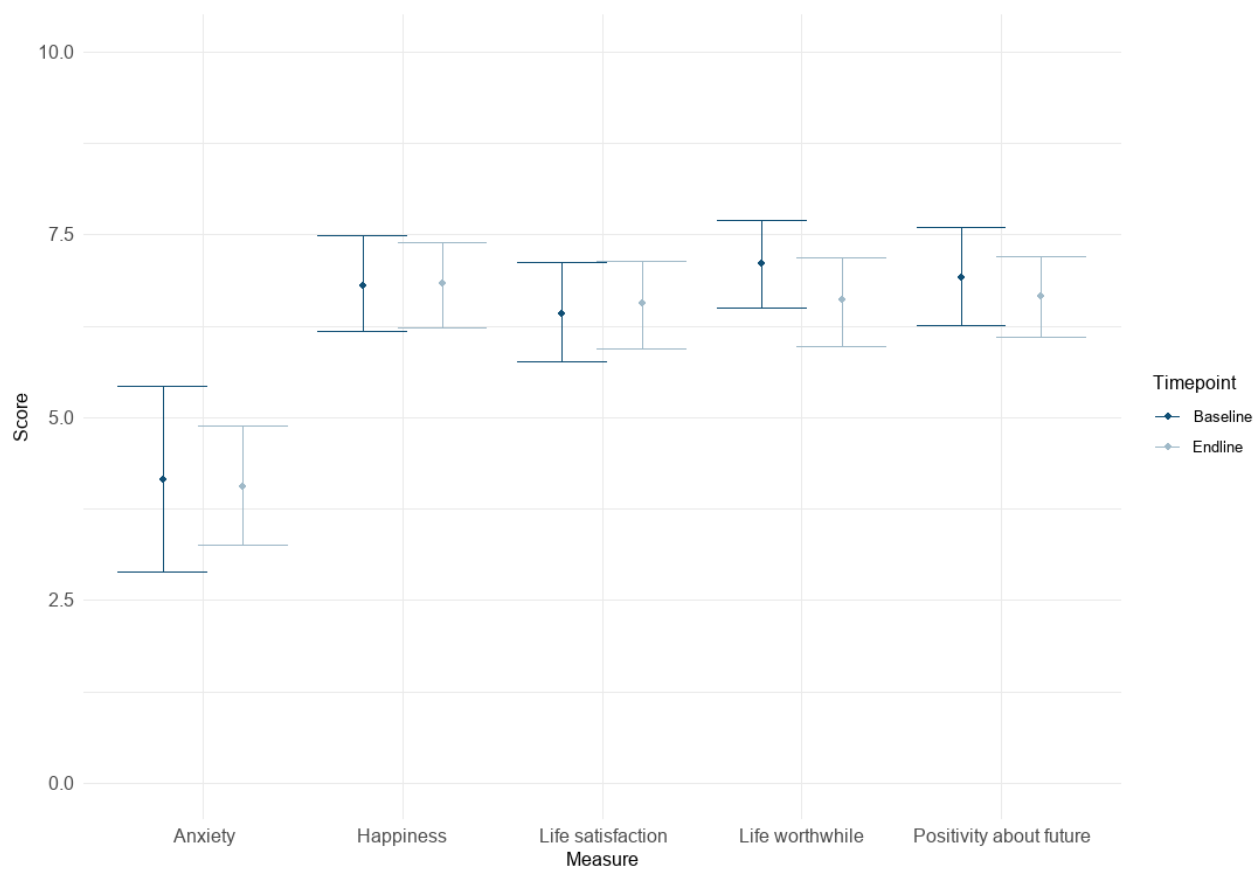
Feelings of loneliness

A small minority of Children and Young People Survey respondents indicated feeling lonely often/always, across the baseline (11%), and endline (6%) surveys. The difference between baseline and endline was not statistically significant (see Table A11 for all baseline and endline comparisons). Further qualitative insights in relation to feelings of loneliness are reported in the Year 1 early findings report.

Children and young people's wellbeing

As shown in Figure 2 and reported in Table 10, there were no statistically significant differences in wellbeing scores between baseline and endline samples for Family Finding respondents (aged 11 to 17 years and care leavers). This indicates that, within the observed data, we did not detect evidence of meaningful change in self-reported wellbeing in relation to the Family Finding projects. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution - the sample sizes were small, which reduces statistical power and increases the risk of failing to detect a true effect (Type II error). In other words, it remains possible that genuine changes in wellbeing occurred for children and young people but were not evident statistically given the small sample size.

Figure 2 Forest plot with mean score and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for Family Finding participants' responses to wellbeing questions at baseline and endline for 11 to 17-year-olds and care leavers



Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table 10 Family Finding participants' (11 to 17-year-olds and care leavers) responses to wellbeing questions at baseline and endline

Wellbeing measure	N	Baseline mean score (SD)	Endline mean score (SD)	Sig. (p)
Anxiety	69	4.2 (3.3)	4.1 (2.8)	0.89
Happiness	128	6.8 (2.4)	6.8 (2.5)	0.94
Life satisfaction	127	6.4 (2.5)	6.6 (2.6)	0.76
Life worthwhile	126	7.1 (2.2)	6.6 (2.6)	0.25
Positivity about future	126	6.9 (2.4)	6.7 (2.5)	0.56

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Qualitative findings from the Children and Young People Survey highlighted the effects of Family Finding projects on the wellbeing of participants. When asked if they wanted to say anything else about the project, the majority of those who gave a positive qualitative response about the project specifically mentioned being glad to be in touch with family, feeling less lonely and/or having greater confidence in communicating with others.

The Lifelong Links project has built my confidence up. The comfort and trust I have in my Lifelong Links worker has helped me. It is like having a counselling session but a lot less formal, it makes me feel confident to speak to my worker and happy that I'm listened to. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

Identity and belonging

Most Children and Young People Survey respondents reported feeling safe (73% - 75%) and settled at home (64% - 55%), across baseline and endline surveys respectively. Most children and young people also reported they had an adult explain to them why they were in care (69% - 74%) across both surveys. None of the differences between baseline and endline surveys were statistically significant (see Table A11 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

Some survey respondents also reflected in the qualitative questions how connecting with members of their family had helped them to learn more about their own histories and their family members. This echoes qualitative views shared in the Year 1 early findings report.

My Lifelong Links worker has been supporting me through the whole Lifelong Links process, [I was expecting a baby] and her support was amazing! As result of Lifelong Links, I am now in contact with my half-sisters on my dad's side, this has been amazing as we have had similar experiences. Even though my dad hasn't responded I have learnt more about him too through my sisters. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

I want to say that I know my half siblings at the end of Lifelong Links and that means that they are doing good. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

Sense of community

A strong majority of children and young people (96% - 99%) reported they always/sometimes felt safe in their local area, as well as feeling they belong in their local area (89% - 85%), across baseline and endline surveys respectively. The differences between baseline and endline surveys were not statistically significant (see Table A11 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

Wider outcomes

Most children and young people reported liking school (74% - 56%), frequently getting outdoors (79% - 90%), and doing similar things to their friends (79% - 86%). Children and young people were particularly positive about often/always getting to practice life skills (96% - 100%), always/sometimes spending time on hobbies or activities (100% - 100%), and always/sometimes enjoying their time (100% - 100%). Differences in the above questions between baseline and endline surveys were not statistically significant (see Table A11 for all baseline-endline comparisons). Wider outcomes of Family Finding projects identified through qualitative evidence are presented in the Year 1 early findings report, including enhanced access to education, training and employment and related support.

Economic evaluation

Key findings

- Seventy-one per cent of allocated funds were spent in the first 3 financial quarters of Year 2.
- Given the anticipated spend for Q4, the 2025/26 financial year total is likely to have an underspend, although this may be overestimated due to missing Q4 data.
- The average cost per child or young person supported was £3,459. Local authorities with smaller numbers of children and young people reported tended to have higher costs per child and young person, though this relationship is weak.
- The estimated value from improved relationships was not enough for the projects to be considered value for money, compared to the £3,459 cost per child/young person. However, value for money may be achieved if well-being or loneliness improvements are realised.
- Caution should be applied when interpreting these findings due to the early nature of the outcomes and economic assessment; the variable quality of the data provided across local authorities; the lack of availability of central programme costs; and some of the assumptions in the breakeven analysis.

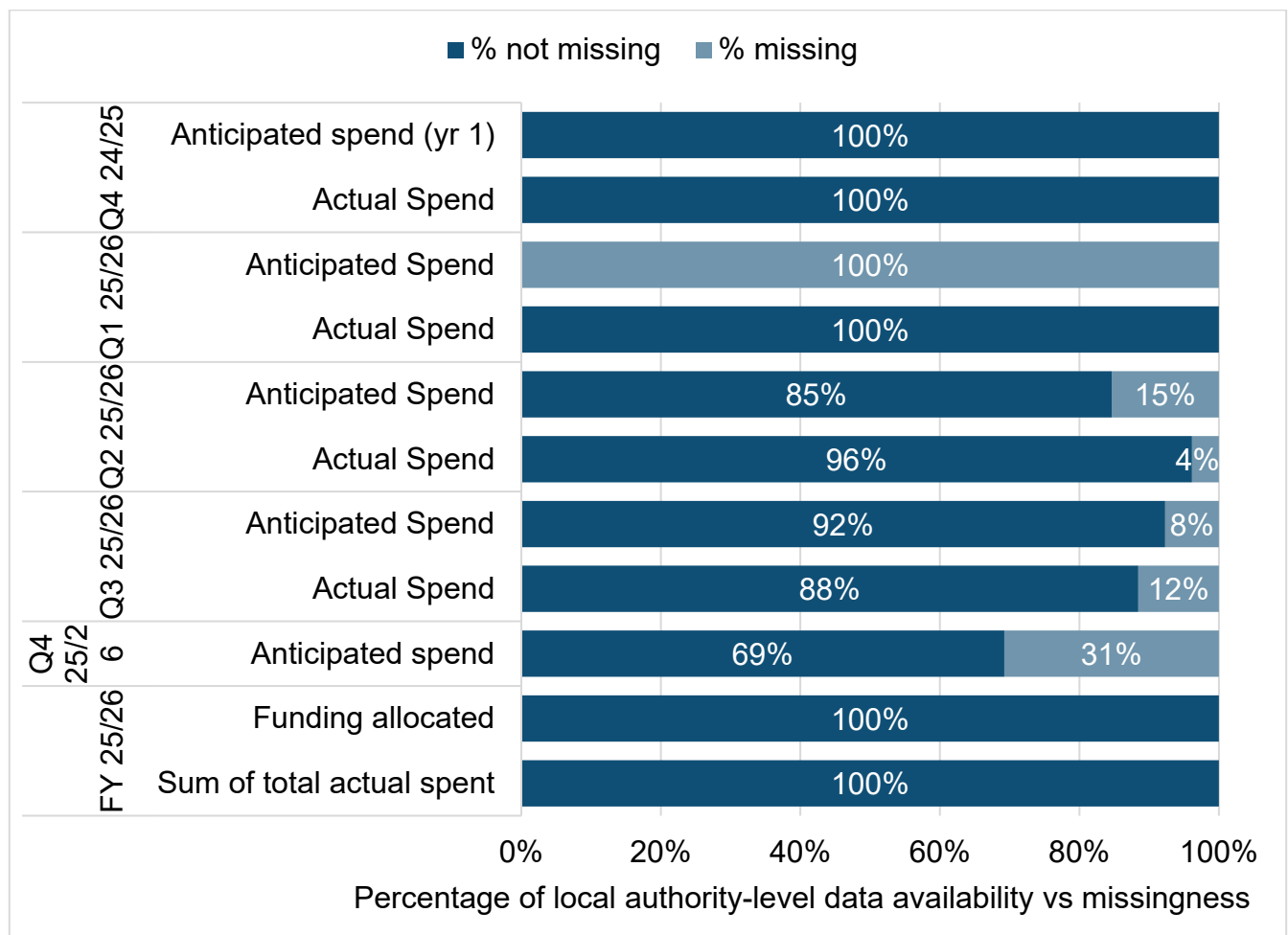
This section sets out findings from the evaluation's economic analysis based on costs and outcomes of the Family Finding projects. Due to the early nature of the outcomes assessment, outcomes are not monetised for a full cost benefit analysis. Instead, breakeven analysis – an assessment of how many outcomes would need to be realised, based on an estimate of the monetary value of those outcomes, for the project to break even in terms of its costs – is presented. The section concludes with a discussion on the value for money of the Family Finding projects so far.

Family Finding programme costs

The evaluation team examined the financial data provided for each local authority delivering Family Finding projects (N=26). The data collected included anticipated spend and actual expenditure. It also included total funding and projected expenditure for future quarters. As noted in Analysis of local authority spend data, the central costs to DfE of administering the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme were not included in the economic evaluation.

There was some data missing in the local authorities' cost reporting across financial quarters. Therefore, some caution is required interpreting actual and anticipated spend across 2025/26 Q2, Q3, and Q4, which are likely to be underreported. Anticipated data may be particularly affected due to no collection of anticipated spend in data Q1, and over 30% data missing for Q4 (with data for 18 of 26 local authorities received). The missing data was spread across different local authorities and was not consistent across quarters. Unlike local authority reported spend, total allocated funds are reported by DfE for the full year (2025/26) and so will be accurate.

Figure 3: Cost data completeness (Family Finding, N=26)



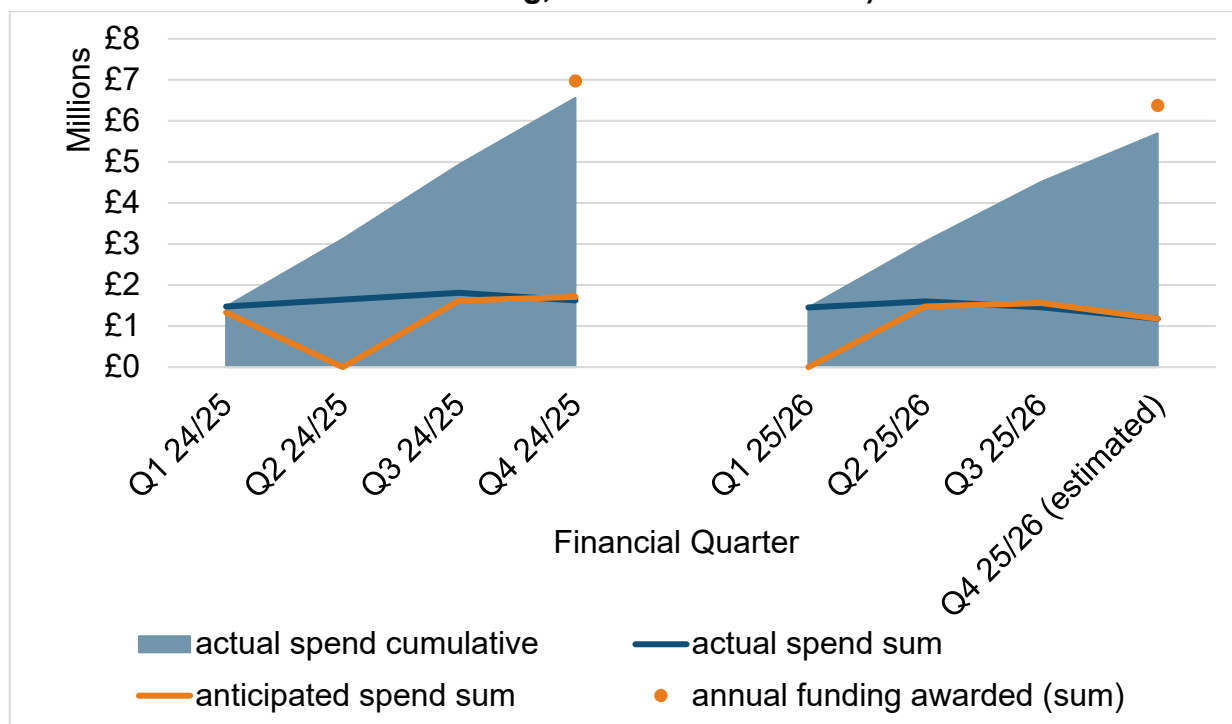
Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2025/26)

Table 11 summarises, across quarters and over the financial year, the sum and average actual spend by local authorities. From an allocated £6,373,428, 71% (£4,517,480) was spent in the first 3 financial quarters. The anticipated spend for Q4 (£1,179,121) takes this total to an estimated £5,696,601 (89% of the funds allocated) and an average of £219,100 per local authority for the 2025/26 financial year. This leaves an estimated £676,827 underspend. However, as 30% of the anticipated spend is missing for Q4 2025-26, this underspend amount is likely overestimated.

Table 11: Summary of actual spend, per quarter and overall (Family Finding, 2025/26)

	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Total spent	Q4 25/26 (estimated)	Total with estimate
Number of local authorities with data	26	22	25	26	18	26
Spend (sum)	£1,455,147	£1,603,467	£1,458,866	£4,517,480	£1,179,121	£5,696,601
Average spend per LA ²⁸	£55,967	£67,108	£64,139	£173,749	£65,507	£219,100

Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2025/26)

Figure 4: Actual and anticipated spend compared to total funding allocated (Family Finding, 2024/25 and 2025/26)

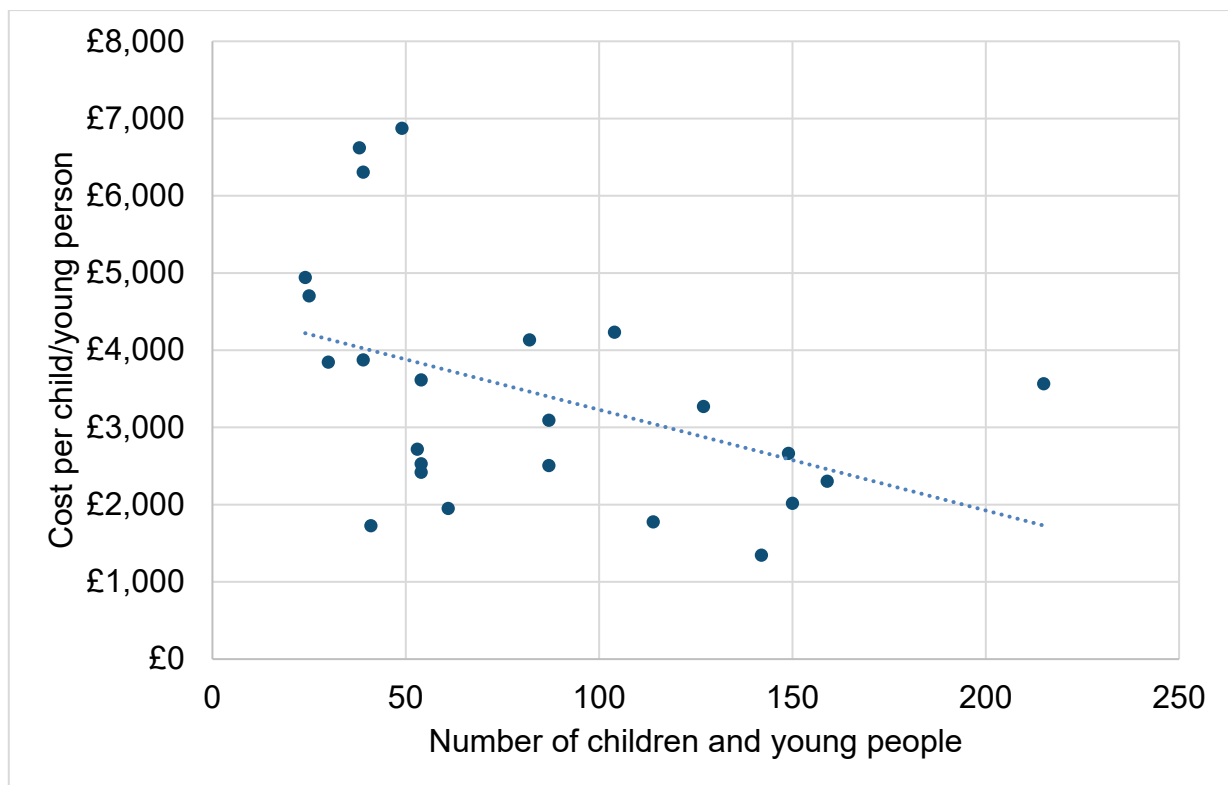
Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2024/25, 2025/26)

²⁸ Note that this is average of spend per local authority where reported, meaning missing data is not included. This reflects the change in sample size for each quarter.

In the Year 1 early findings report, as Q4 for 2024-25 had not been finalised, we estimated an underspend. Based on updated figures, the final spend for Family Finding projects in 2024-25 was £6,562,082, with an average of £243,040 per local authority, meaning an underspend of £406,801 overall.

Thus, compared to the previous financial year, the annual funding amount and total spent for the financial year of 2025/26 have both slightly decreased. There were fewer participating local authorities in 2025-26 (N=26) than last year (N=27), which partly accounts for this decrease. The estimated underspend has increased, due at least in part to data missing for anticipated spend in Q4. However, even if the true spend for Q4 matches the spend in Q3, there would still be an underspend of over £200,000. Though the underspend is likely overestimated, it is unlikely that there will be any overspend.

Figure 5: Number of children and young people and the cost per child/young person (Family Finding, Q1-Q3 2025/26)



Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2025/26); 2025/26 MI data

Figure 5 above shows the cost per child and young person, calculated using the sum of total spent (using only Q1 to Q3 data) and the latest MI data on the number of children and young people reached per local authority. There was one local authority with children and young people returns data missing, which is excluded here. The average cost per supported child and young person was £3,459, with a total of 1,977 children and young people reached overall and an average of 82 children and young people per local authority. There is a weak trend, shown by the dotted trendline, where local authorities

with smaller numbers of children and young people reported having higher costs per child and young person.

Breakeven analysis

This section presents breakeven analysis – an assessment of how many outcomes would need to be realised, based on an estimate of the monetary value of those outcomes, for the project to break even in terms of its costs. The analysis is informed by the early outcomes assessment, MI and Children and Young People Survey.

We would advise caution when interpreting these findings due to the limitations of the outcomes assessment (see Limitations of the evaluation).

Enhanced relationships

MI analysis estimated that children and young people gain, on average, 2.2 connections after engaging with a Family Finding project. The number of connections increased over time, up to one year. On average, an additional 30 days of support was associated with +0.38 connections.

Connections can form enhanced relationships. There is no widely recognised unit cost or valuation of a “connection”. Different connections may mean different things to different people, and so may vary in their valuations.

In this analysis, the evaluation team considered 2 valuations of the benefit from connections – £83 and £975. These represent what might be considered the lower and higher estimates for the value of relationships. Further information on these valuations is given in Annex - Economic evaluation.

Both unit costs provide benefits to society rather than necessarily being ‘cashable’ (available to spend by government, local authorities or individuals) or providing reduced taxpayer spend (fiscal benefits), or to individuals or the economy as a whole (economic benefits).

Table 12 shows these values after adjusting for inflation (as real prices) and an estimation of deadweight (what would have happened anyway). This meant that the values or benefits from enhanced relationships were estimated to be £61 and £1,021 based on lower and higher estimations respectively.

Table 12: Value of connections

Value of connection	Value of connection (real prices, Feb 2026)	Value of impact adjusted for deadweight (-26.3%)
£83	£83	£61
£975	£1,385	£1,021

Sources: Connection values: Lifelong Links Cost Benefit Analysis template; Colombo, E. and Stanca, L. (2013); Inflation calculator: [bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator](https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator); Deadweight: UK Government (2021)

Children and young people's wellbeing

There were no statistically significant differences in wellbeing scores in the samples for Family Finding Children and Young People Survey respondents. The sample sizes were small, however, and it remains possible that genuine changes in wellbeing occurred but were not evident statistically.

If differences in wellbeing were found, then returns could be substantial. To assess wellbeing, care-experienced children and young people were asked the same questions that were used to measure subjective well-being by the Office for National Statistics (2020).²⁹

Life satisfaction can be valued using a Wellbeing Adjusted Life Year (WELLBY), with a 1-point improvement in wellbeing providing an economic benefit of between £2,500 and £16,000 per person per year (see Annex – Economic evaluation).

Table 13 outlines these wellbeing values, adjusted for inflation and deadweight. Wellbeing benefits range from £2,312 to £15,307 depending on the WELLBY value used.

Alternative values are provided, estimating an indicative 10% value for improvement in wellbeing, and after adjusting for deadweight. These should be seen as heavily discounted values representing a 90% reduction on the value of wellbeing, to account for uncertainty and provide very conservative estimates.

²⁹ Office for National Statistics (2020) Young People's Well-being Measures Published: 2 October 2020 [ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/youngpeopleswellbeingmeasures](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/youngpeopleswellbeingmeasures)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/youngpeopleswellbeingmeasures>

Table 13: Value of wellbeing

WELLBY value (original, 1 scale improvement in life satisfaction)	WELLBY value (real prices, Feb 2026)	Value of impact of FF adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)	Indicative 0.1 scale improvement in life satisfaction	Value of impact of FF adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)
£2,500	£3,137	£2,312	£314	£231
£10,000	£12,981	£9,567	£1,298	£957
£13,000	£16,876	£12,438	£1,688	£1,244
£16,000	£20,770	£15,307	£2,077	£1,531

Sources: WELLBY values: MacLennan, S. and Stead, I. (2021), Frijters, P. and Krekel, C. (2021);

Inflation calculator: bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator;

Impact findings: Coram analysis of adapted and historical Bright Spots surveys;

Deadweight: UK Government (2021)

Feelings of loneliness

A small minority of Children and Young People Survey respondents indicated feeling lonely often/always, across the baseline (11%) and endline (6%) surveys. The difference between baseline and endline was not statistically significant.

If differences in loneliness were found, however, then returns could be substantial, much like with wellbeing. Using an uprated unit cost (£8,275) from the Loneliness Monetisation Report representing the alleviation of “mild” loneliness,³⁰ Table 14 illustrates a full and also an indicative 10% value for improvement in loneliness (£828 – or £8,275 x 10%). This should be seen as a heavily discounted value representing a 90% reduction on the value of alleviating loneliness, to account for uncertainty and potential double-counting with the value of wellbeing. Further deadweight applied gives a value of £610 as a very conservative value for an improvement in loneliness.

³⁰ Peytrignet S, Garforth-Bles S, Keohane K, 2020. Loneliness Monetisation Report. DCMS. The unit cost represents the difference between mild loneliness and no loneliness.

Table 14: Value of loneliness

Lack of mild loneliness value	Loneliness value (real prices, Feb 2026)	Value of impact of FF adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)	Indicative 10% improvement in loneliness	Value of impact of FF adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)
£6,429	£8,275	£6,099	£828	£610

Sources: Loneliness value: Peytrignet S, Garforth-Bles S, Keohane K, 2020. Loneliness Monetisation Report. DCMS; Inflation calculator: bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator;

Impact findings: Coram analysis of adapted and historical Bright Spots surveys;

Deadweight: UK Government (2021)

Value for money assessment

The average cost per supported child or young person of the Family Finding project was £3,459. The value from enhanced relationships – between £61 and £1,021 – is not enough for the project to be considered value for money alone, compared to the cost per child or young person of £3,459.

However, if changes in wellbeing and/or loneliness were to be observed, the project could provide value for money. For example, a 0.1 scale improvement in life satisfaction would provide between £231 and £1,531 of benefit after an adjustment for deadweight is made, depending on the value of a WELLBY used. A full 1.0 scale benefit would benefit to the extent of £2,312 and £15,307, depending on the WELLBY value and after adjusting for deadweight.

Alleviating mild loneliness could add between £610 and £6,099 after adjusting for deadweight, depending on the value used and sensitivity analysis to account for uncertainty and double counting.

Scenarios using the different values are given in Annex – Economic evaluation: Breakeven analysis. Out of 64 scenarios, 46 of them would exceed the breakeven cost per child or young person of £3,459 and, on a basic level, provide value for money.

Most of the benefits related to wellbeing benefits, thus are not cashable (available to spend by government, local authorities, individuals or society).

As noted above, caution should be applied when interpreting these findings due to the early nature of this assessment, that the quality of the data provided varied across local authorities, lack of central programme costs, and some of the assumptions made.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the economic evaluation of the Family Finding projects does not cover all benefits. The economic evaluation did not consider outcomes beyond

those articulated in the ToCs (see Annex – Theories of Change), which were highlighted in the Year 1 early findings report.

To conclude this section, assessing the programme more generally across a ‘4Es’ framework of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity:³¹

- at present, the project is not cost effective based on the benefits from enhanced relationships
- the project may be cost effective if benefits from wellbeing and/or alleviating loneliness are realised
- some perceived cost-efficiencies were also identified in the Year 1 early findings report through qualitative research, such as building on existing systems and structures or recruiting staff with relevant experience
- some underspending is likely to result from the early nature of the programme and this assessment, rather than necessarily economy and efficiency improvements
- local authorities with smaller numbers of children and young people reported tended to have higher costs per child or young person, though this relationship is weak
- equity considerations are considered elsewhere in this report, in findings from the process evaluation and through qualitative research

Based on data available from Year 1 and Year 2 of the evaluation, there is evidence to suggest that the Family Finding projects were well delivered, despite some challenges, and that large numbers of children and young people received support to (re)connect with important people in their lives. Concluding remarks across the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme, and specific recommendations for Family Finding projects are provided in Conclusions and recommendations.

³¹ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20240802044921/https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/general-principles/value-for-money/assessing-value-for-money.

Befriending and Mentoring

Projects' design, delivery and reach

Key findings

- Befriending and Mentoring projects followed a range of different models and approaches, depending on the target cohort of children and young people, and the intended outcomes.
- The majority of projects took a targeted approach, focussing on working with particular sub-cohorts of care-experienced children and young people. Some groups proved harder to engage. A smaller portion took a universal approach. Most projects who did take a targeted approach went on to work with those target cohorts to some extent.
- Support through the projects was largely delivered either face to face or with a combination of face to face and online and typically included meeting with children and young people once per week. Support typically ranged from 4 months to a year.
- Sustained engagement was supported by trust-based, flexible and tailored approaches, including careful matching and consistent communication.
- The ways projects determined when support ended varied. According to the Project Lead Survey respondents, the majority of projects took a mentee-led approach to planning support ending, either when outcomes had been reached or when the mentee chose to end support.
- Close working and integration with local authorities and other services was seen as a key enabler to delivery, as well as the ability to be flexible to meet the needs of children and young people. Having dedicated DfE funding to support the projects was a key enabler to delivery, but late notice of funding extensions led to challenges.
- According to the programme MI data, there were 987 children and young people referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects in Year 1, and 604 referred in Year 2. Of those, around 1 in 10 had completed the programme at the time of the latest MI submission used in this report.

- Withdrawal rates increased in Year 2 compared to Year 1, particularly among older young people, care leavers and those not in education, employment or training, reflecting wider instability in young people's lives.
- More than half of children and young people were care leavers (56%). 44% of participants were children in care. The average age of children and young people was 18 years.

Year 2 of the evaluation focused on exploring Befriending and Mentoring projects in more depth. This was due to the wide range and variety of projects delivered through the programme and a less established evidence base for Befriending and Mentoring projects, compared to Family Finding projects (further information is given in Overview of evaluation). This chapter provides an overview of Befriending and Mentoring projects' design and delivery, methods of reaching and engaging children and young people, and reflections on successes, challenges and lessons learned from project delivery.

The findings are based on the Project Lead Survey (which achieved responses from project leads of 15 out of a total 21 local authorities); focus groups with project leads and mentors; and interviews and workshops with children and young people. Key examples have been provided throughout to highlight specific elements of Befriending and Mentoring projects' design.

Project design

Although the duration, focus, and activities offered varied between different types of Befriending and Mentoring projects, they generally followed a common delivery pathway, from recruitment and matching through to relationship-building and reflection. As was presented in the Year 1 report, the way these stages were implemented varied by project, cohort and intended outcomes.

Projects' aims and objectives

The Project Lead Survey data showed the Befriending and Mentoring projects aligned to the overall programme aim of improving children and young people's sense of identity and community, and creating safe, stable and loving relationships for children in care and care leavers. Unlike Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring projects were less aligned to the aim of helping children and young people to identify and connect with the important people in their lives, as they focused more on establishing new (rather than reconnecting) relationships (such as with mentors).

Project Lead Survey respondents identified a range of project-specific aims which were less aligned with the programme level aims (although were noted in the wider Theories of Change). While DfE defined outcomes at the programme level, there was flexibility at the

project level to tailor projects and outcomes to the specific cohorts with which projects worked. This meant some aims or outcomes, though not intended by DfE for the programme overall, were intentionally pursued at the project level. These included practical aims, such as supporting children and young people to access training and employment, and more general objectives such as ‘fulfil potential’, or ‘achieve aspirations’. Relevant outcomes most selected by Project Lead Survey respondents were improved wellbeing, increased confidence, and increased participation in their community.

Matching processes

Mentors were typically matched with just one child or young person. Children and young people who took part in interviews or workshops indicated this was important to them, a view echoed by project leads and mentors. One project, which had a paid mentor model, matched mentors to more than one child or young person (10 to 15 at any time). It was not clear from the data available whether mentees knew their mentor supported others.

Matching criteria

Findings from the Project Lead Survey highlighted a range of reasons for matching children and young people with mentors, typically matching on at least 2 criteria:

- the most common criteria for matching, as reported by Project Lead Survey respondents, was shared interests between mentors and mentees. While some mentors did not consider this important, young people were clear that shared interests or characteristics mattered to them
- geographical proximity was a core consideration for matching as projects prioritised being able to provide in-person meetings between mentors and mentees. Where fewer mentors were available or children and young people were geographically isolated, location could be the primary basis for matching
- projects also matched based on the characteristics of the befriender and mentor. Most frequently, this included matching based on similar characteristics (such as heritage, community, culture, religion) with a smaller portion matching based on contrasting characteristics (for example, intergenerational)

I just feel like everybody should have the chance to have somebody who's similar to them – *Child or young person (interview participant)*

- having both male and female mentors was important for matching, as project leads suggested some children and young people preferred to be matched with a mentor of the same gender
- where children and young people had specific career aspirations, relevant mentor expertise was also a basis for matching

Project leads interviewed suggested that where a large and varied pool of mentors was available in their project, a highly individualised match based on multiple criteria was made, which was preferable.

While Project Lead Survey respondents commonly indicated that children and young people's choice also fed into the matching process in their project, project leads who participated in the focus groups rarely described this as the primary basis for matching. Instead, projects typically offered children and young people a choice to switch their mentor rather than initially select their mentor. The extent to which children and young people were aware of this option was unclear; young people who attended the workshops suggested they did not know if they could ask to change mentors, suggesting this could be better advertised to children and young people.

Where projects gave children and young people more influence over the mentor with whom they were matched, this was done in a number of different ways. This included offering opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet socially before matching (and indicate their preference), 'approving' mentors' profiles before being matched, and in one example, a project gave young people a role in recruiting mentors.

Peer mentoring example

Almost half of Befriending and Mentoring projects adopted a peer mentor model. Peer mentors are care-experienced mentors who may be a similar age or older than mentees. Where projects took a 'peer mentoring' approach particular care was taken in the matching process to avoid re-traumatising those involved. For example, prior to matching a project lead observed children and young people interacting during group-based activities to inform decisions about which peer mentors and mentees to match.

Projects taking a peer mentoring approach were highly flexible: mode and frequency of engagement was led by both mentors and mentees; there was no strict time limit for the mentorship duration; a needs-led approach was taken to when mentorships ended; and no pre-determined outcomes were expected.

Projects that offered peer mentoring commonly offered wider support to mentees, recognising the limits of the mentoring support. This included a paid coordinator or professional mentor to support children and young people needing specific support such as those with SEND, or if children and young people preferred to have a mentor who was not care-experienced. Additionally, project leads suggested that peer mentors – particularly younger individuals – sometimes struggled with boundaries which could result in suppressing their own needs or being affected by mentees' challenges. Therefore, additional support and proactive check-ins with mentors and mentees were needed.

Matching timelines

Focus groups with project leads and mentors highlighted a wide variation in the duration of the matching process for children and young people with different needs and matching requirements. This variation also reflected changes over the lifetime of projects, including fluctuations in mentor/mentee recruitment and retention, funding-related pauses, and evolving delivery processes. The Project Lead Survey found similar trends.

- two-thirds of Project Lead Survey respondents indicated their project's matching process typically took less than one month
- a smaller proportion reported that matching took longer: 1 to 2 months or 7 months to 1 year

The MI data showed the average duration between a child or young person being referred to the project and support starting was 35 days. Sixty-seven per cent of children and young people waited up to 30 days for support to start. Further information is available in cross reference to Participation and engagement].

Onboarding

Onboarding typically involved discussions to understand children and young people's needs and motivations for mentoring to inform the matching process and ensure suitability. This was sometimes supported by 'About Me' booklets. One project had enhanced their onboarding process from Year 1 by moving away from assessing prospective mentees' needs through an app to having a phone call; this resulted in more mentee uptake of the offer.

Mentor types and roles

Across projects, there was a mix of paid and volunteer mentor roles, with most having volunteer mentors. Project Lead Survey respondents indicated that their project had:

- volunteer mentors (10 of 15)
- paid mentors (5 of 10)
- had both paid and volunteer mentors (2 of 15)

Paid mentors typically had time-limited roles with a pre-planned duration of time the project would deliver mentoring to each mentee, or a set number of hours of mentoring support they could provide. While some projects with volunteer mentors also had a planned length of support, most offered a more flexible approach to when support would end.

In projects that had volunteer and paid mentors, project lead and mentor focus group participants explained that paid roles were for mentor coordinators or mentors focused on

goal-oriented activities, whereas volunteers were unlikely to have coordination responsibilities. Volunteer mentors were more focussed on complementary activities such as socialising and emotional support alongside goal-oriented mentoring.

The most common approach to recruiting mentors, as indicated by the Project Lead Survey respondents, were through:

- local online promotion (10 of 15)
- local volunteering groups (10 of 15)
- advertising internally to local authority staff (9 of 15)
- and word of mouth (7 of 15)

Where local authorities worked with third party providers to deliver their project, mentor recruitment was typically led by the third party. There were some challenges with recruitment which are discussed in Reflections on delivery.

Mentor characteristics

The Project Lead Survey provided insights into the different characteristics of mentors recruited across projects:

- just over half of survey respondents (8 of 15) reported their project mentors were intergenerational (where mentors are older than the children and young people they are supporting, typically aged 50+)
- nearly half of respondents (7 of 15) reported their project worked with peer mentors - however, the qualitative data highlighted different interpretations of 'peer mentors' with some projects interpreting this as mentors who were also care-experienced, whilst others interpreted this as mentors being a similar age to mentees. Care-experienced mentors were more common, and only a small number of projects worked with peer mentors who were a similar age to the children and young people they worked with
- a smaller portion of projects (3 of 15) were working with sector-specific mentors (mentors were working in a sector that the child or young person was interested working in). For example, one young person interviewed valued being matched with a veteran as they wanted to join the military

Mentoring to support children and young people into apprenticeships

One project targeted care-experienced young people being onboarded to local apprenticeship schemes as part of their mentoring offer. This involved seconding existing staff from the host organisation into a mentoring role for care-experienced apprentices. One young person described how their mentor supported them in a professional capacity before formally becoming their mentor. They liked that they already knew their mentor as this meant that from the first day of the mentorship, they could focus on professional development, rather than getting to know each other first. The young person said they could open-up about things they would not have disclosed prior to their colleague being their mentor.

Activities and delivery of support

Duration and frequency of support

The average planned length of support, as reported by Project Lead Survey respondents, was typically 4 months to 1 year, with a small number offering support for over a year. This aligns with findings from the MI data which found that support lasted on average 7 months (Participation and engagement).

The length of support and frequency of mentoring sessions varied widely between projects and tended to be led by the children and young people's needs. However, as reported in the Year 1 early findings report, some paid mentors were contractually obliged to deliver a set amount of mentoring and this tended to determine the length and frequency of support. That said, the Year 2 Project Lead Survey respondents were asked how often it was expected for children and young people to meet their mentors; they indicated that this should be:

- weekly (6 of 14)
- monthly (3 of 14)
- fortnightly (2 of 14)
- more than once per week (1 of 14)

Two respondents, both leading peer mentoring projects, indicated there were no expectations or guidelines for meeting frequency; it was left up to the mentor/mentee preferences.

Mentor and project lead focus group participants explained that, in practice, even where projects intended to deliver a set frequency of mentoring, a more flexible approach was often taken. Young people who participated in the evaluation also described meeting their mentors at different frequencies. They explained this could change over the course of their

mentorship and was sometimes led by what the young person felt was most suitable for them at the time.

Where projects did have a set quantity of sessions or duration of mentoring support required, this was not always possible to deliver. This reflected a misalignment between the structure of some projects and the everyday lives of the children and young people. Some children and young people had sufficient time to participate in the number of hours prescribed by the project, whereas others had less availability due to, for example, school or work commitments. This was particularly acute for children and young people who started mentoring later in each funded year – the uncertainty of future funding resulted in projects wanting to deliver the contracted number of sessions before the programme potentially ended (this is discussed further in the Year 1 early findings report).³²

If there's a lot of other stuff going on that can be almost a hindrance to us delivering on what they're asking of us because they're asking us [paid mentors] to spend 80 hours with this young person. But this young person hasn't got a spare 80 hours between now and March. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

Young people interviewed valued their mentors taking a young person-led approach to the frequency of their interactions and being flexible depending on what was going on in their lives at the time. For example, one mentee appreciated it when their mentor noticed when they were having a bad day and would give them a call. While mentors generally described taking a young person-led approach, where this was not the case, young people could disengage. One young person interviewed explained their mentor sometimes 'sprung' their mentoring meetings on them and suggested they would prefer a more regular and consistent timeslot. These findings demonstrate the importance of projects adopting an individualised approach for each child or young person based on their needs and availability.

Activities

Most projects adopted blended approaches to supporting children and young people by combining one-to-one and group activities. According to Project Lead Survey respondents, over half of the projects delivered group activities. Projects predominantly included both mentees and their mentors/befrienders in their group sessions, with a small portion holding sessions solely for mentees. The survey also asked project leads about the different activities their project offered, and how they were delivered. Some activities were primarily delivered one-to-one, giving mentees and mentors time to talk freely about an issue or work towards specific goals. Activities commonly delivered in group settings included

³² See 'Child and young person led approach' in the Year 1 early findings report: [Evaluation of the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring programme: Year 1 early findings report](#)

creative or sports activities. Further information about the format of sessions is described in the Year 1 early findings report.

Modes of delivery

Project Lead Survey data showed the primary mode of support for Befriending and Mentoring projects was face-to-face or a mix of face-to-face and remote (phone and online). However, all projects whose leads responded to the survey provided some form of communication between meetings, usually through messages or calls, which mentees appreciated. For 2 projects, the primary mode of support was digital: one primarily through messages (such as SMS, WhatsApp or via a dedicated mentoring app), and the other was online (video calls).

Communication between mentors and mentees

A third-party delivery partner lead described their dedicated app for mentors and mentees to communicate. The app meant mentees and mentors did not need to share personal information (such as addresses or personal phone numbers) and enabled senior staff to review on-going communications if any safeguarding concerns were raised. In the second year of delivery, the messaging portal was enhanced to use WhatsApp. This was believed to have enhanced mentee engagement because WhatsApp is commonly used by young people and they did not need a new app to communicate with their mentor specifically.

Ending of support

The ways projects determined when support for children and young people ended varied. According to the Project Lead Survey respondents, the majority of projects (8 of 14) took a mentee-led approach to planning support ending, either when outcomes had been reached or when the mentee chose to end support. However, 3 Project Lead Survey respondents, all of whom worked with third parties with pre-established mentoring delivery models, reported a pre-determined length of support. Three projects indicated the planned length of support was more varied and gave multiple context specific reasons for ending support in different circumstances.

Project leads were also asked whether mentees and mentors were encouraged to stay in contact once support ended:

- over half of projects encouraged continued contact between mentors and mentees, if both parties wished to stay in touch (8 of 14)
- two respondents reported that continued contact was not expected
- three respondents were unsure

Young people consulted through the workshops, whose support had ended, suggested they were comfortable with their support coming to an end after a pre-determined length of

time. However, they explained the importance of this being set out clearly from the beginning.

Target cohorts and specialist approaches

Most Project Lead Survey respondents reported their projects were targeted at specific cohorts of care-experienced children and young people (12 of 15), the rest did not take a targeted approach. Just over half of Project Lead Survey respondents indicated their targeted projects aimed to reach and engage both care leavers and children in care; however, a small number of projects only targeted care leavers.

Projects often targeted multiple cohorts. As such, the overall project design was not bespoke to any one group but tailored to the individual children and young people it sought to support. For example, one project targeted children and young people aged 5 to 25 years in specific subgroups considered the most in need of support (such as young parents, those in residential care, transitioning to independent living, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and those involved with Youth Offending Teams). The target cohorts changed over the course of delivery for several projects, as other groups were identified as being in need of support. For example, one project initially targeted young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) but shifted to focus on those leaving prison.

Projects that targeted unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people specifically included some distinctive design elements (see case study box below). Some project leads and mentors reported challenges in supporting this cohort where projects were not set up specifically to work with them. This included mentors' expectations for the mentorship not necessarily aligning with the mentorship experience due to the specific needs of this cohort - such as a stronger focus on learning English - and difficulties in accessing translators.

Projects designed for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Some key learning from projects that reached and engaged unaccompanied asylum seeking children in care and care leavers included:

- Working with local authority UASC teams, where they existed, to achieve referrals. These teams knew of all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people moving to their area and so were well-placed to ensure the mentoring offer was promoted to children and young people.
- Training mentors in the asylum process, safeguarding within the asylum system, and how to support English language skills development.
- One project specifically commissioned a specialist immigration support service. This meant that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people could be matched with a mentor who worked for a charitable organisation with expertise in asylum processes (such as advocacy; legal support) and offered a supporting caseworker where needed.
- Offering specific activities to help unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people settle and integrate into the UK including supporting English language skill development, helping to understand and connect with their local area, and increase knowledge and awareness of immigration support on offer. Group activities, , alongside one-to-one mentoring, such as group cooking classes where young people could share food from their culture with others, were reported to work well.
- Focusing on outcomes such as community integration and English language skill development.
- Providing translation services where needed.

Most projects targeting particular groups or sub-groups of children and young people went on to work with those groups, however some groups were not engaged as projects had originally intended. According to the Project Lead Survey, all projects which targeted children in care were able to work with children in care. However, one project that sought to target care leavers did not work with any care leavers – it was not clear if this was due to engagement issues (as was reported in the Year 1 early finding report) or due to a planned change of direction. In addition, the Project Lead Survey suggested that despite targeting them, projects did not always reach children and young people:

- who were not in education, training or employment (NEET)
- with a mental health issue
- with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- at-risk of exploitation or repeat missing episodes
- living in a children's home or supported accommodation
- young parents
- those who had experienced multiple placement moves (care leavers)

Table A8 in Annex 4 Project Lead Survey: additional data tables provides a breakdown of the cohorts targeted by the projects reported to be taking a targeted approach, and the number of those who went on to work with each target cohort.³³ Further details about the enablers and barriers to engaging children and young people can be found in Reach and engagement.

Across projects, irrespective of the targeted or universal recruitment design, project leads reported their projects had engaged a diverse range of children and young people. Table 15 shows that most projects worked with different groups of children and young people. This can also be attributed to many children in care and care leavers often having multiple complex needs whereby subgroups are not mutually exclusive. The Project Lead Survey and MI data (see Project referrals) found that more Befriending and Mentoring projects worked with care leavers than children in care.

Table 15 Cohorts supported by Befriending and Mentoring projects

Target cohort	Projects working with children in care	Projects working with care leavers
UASC	4	10
NEET	5	11
Those with a mental health issue	4	10
Those living in a children's home or supported accommodation	4	9
SEND	2	6
Those who have experienced multiple placement moves	5	5
Young parents	1	6

³³ Some project leads reported engaging specific cohorts of children and young people despite them not being a target group. These projects are not included in this table.

Target cohort	Projects working with children in care	Projects working with care leavers
Those involved with the criminal justice system, in custody or working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS)	2	6
Those at-risk of exploitation or with repeat missing episodes	2	3
Those living outside of the county/borough which cares for them	2	5
Total	7	14

Source: Project Lead Survey (n=15)

Reflections on delivery

Enablers to Befriending and Mentoring project delivery

The Year 2 focus group and Project Lead Survey data showed that many of the enablers to project implementation reported in the Year 1 early findings report continued to support implementation during Year 2. A full breakdown of Project Lead Survey respondents' views on the enabling factors for their respective projects is provided in Figure A5.

Enablers highlighted in both years included:

- flexible approach to meeting the needs of children and young people, and the relationships built with children and young people
- capacity, resources, agility, expertise and knowledge of third-party providers (where relevant) - mentors continued to speak highly of the training offered to them by third party mentoring providers
- access to resources, systems, and information within the local authority
- relationships with wider partner organisations
- working with children's social care
- alignment with local authorities' wider strategic priorities and buy-in from senior leaders

- dedicated funding and dedicated support from DfE - the funding had enabled projects to provide additional support to children and young people, and without the funding the project would not have been delivered

Funding from the DfE came at a really critical time when we had a high number of UASC young people coming through the National Transfer Scheme. This funding has helped to provide an additional layer of intense support beyond the statutory care and duty of our very busy and hard-working social workers and Personal Advisers. It has provided a wealth of opportunities for our UASC young people. – *Project lead (survey respondent)*

Some changes between the Year 1 and Year 2 evaluation findings were observed. In the first year of delivery, working with wider children's social care and leaving care services was a challenge for some projects due to the capacity constraints in the workforce. By Year 2, focus group data suggested children's social care professionals had increased awareness of the projects and relationships had embedded over time. In Year 2, one project adapted its approach to build direct relationships between the third-party delivery provider and children's social care professionals, rather than the commissioner playing more of an intermediary role as they had in Year 1. This allowed the delivery provider to personally communicate with Personal Advisers to promote the project, thus enhancing the referrals process.

Similarly, while Befriending and Mentoring projects made good progress in establishing a shared understanding of project aims and vision in the first year of delivery, and that strategic alignment and buy-in was a key enabler for this, more progress had been made in Year 2. Project leads shared examples of the evolution of governance which enhanced alignment and buy-in. This included establishing or expanding Steering Groups to include Youth Voice leads, Service Managers and Strategic Leads in the local authority. Inputting into the Corporate Parenting Board was also deemed helpful in working together to support children and young people. However, several third party delivery partners were frustrated they were unable to attend these meetings, which they believed hampered joint problem-solving.

Barriers to Befriending and Mentoring project delivery

Focus group and Project Lead Survey data about the barriers to delivery in Year 2 suggested that some challenges faced in Year 1 were ongoing. A full breakdown of Project Lead Survey respondents' views on the barriers faced in their respective projects are provided in Figure A6, with new insights discussed thereafter.

Uncertainty of programme funding

Uncertainty around future programme funding continued to be a barrier to supporting children and young people, and recruiting and retaining staff and mentors. While DfE

funding was a key enabler, the uncertainty of funding was a barrier to delivery – a view frequently shared by focus group participants. Uncertainty around funding cycles caused disruption to delivery and support for children and young people. Reflecting on the late funding decision at the end of Year 1 delivery, projects reported that they had to pause referrals and matching at an early stage ahead of the potential ending of funding. They feared the programme would need to end and that prospective mentees would be disappointed. Projects also needed to end support early to ensure enough time was dedicated to managing endings with children and young people. Despite the uncertainty, some projects continued to work with children and young people but were unable to provide clarity about whether they would see their mentors in the near future or if the mentorship would come to an end. The potential impact of this uncertainty should not be underestimated:

Last year we got told quite late that it was going to be extending. And for us, endings are really important. So we weren't really able to tell our young people whether we were going to be seeing them in a few months' time, or whether it was going to continue [...] Mentees were worried about that. 'Am I still going to be able to attend the clubs? What's the programme about next year, how it's going to look? So, it has a bigger effect on the mentees than you would realise. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

The late funding decision also affected staff and mentor recruitment. Focus group participants explained that mentors and staff members had left posts towards the end of their initial 12-month term due to the uncertainty of their employee or voluntary roles. This challenge was further exacerbated due to difficulties re-recruiting staff into paid roles on short-term contracts for Year 2 and the additional resource needed for re-recruitment that could have been better spent supporting children and young people. Some projects had to pause mentor recruitment midway through Year 1 for fear of wasting resources on onboarding and training new mentors and then not having sufficient time for them to be matched and support children and young people. Some participants were concerned this could deter people from mentoring in the future.

Recruiting mentors

As was reported in the Year 1 early findings report, recruiting mentors was a multifaceted challenge that continued into Year 2. This included challenges recruiting:

- enough mentors, as was reported by half Project Lead Survey respondents
- the right type of mentors, as reported by just over a third of survey respondents. This included challenges in recruiting men as mentors. One project targeted substantial resource to recruit men and successfully increased the diversity of prospective mentors. However, administrative delays (such as the lengthy DBS

process – reportedly taking 4 months for one project) led to loss of potential mentors and impacted the gender balance and matching process.

- mentors across their rural geography was a particular challenge for one project while others noted that few mentors were willing to travel further than around 10 miles to meet their mentees
- care-experienced unpaid mentors was a challenge for one project, however this was overcome by another that paid their peer mentors.

A mentor suggested a national recruitment campaign for volunteers could generate more interest in mentoring.

Support from wider services

Just over a third of Project Lead Survey respondents reported a lack of support from wider services, suggesting a persistent barrier to delivery. In Year 1, this was primarily driven by difficulties engaging children's social care to secure referrals. Year 2 data suggested this challenge was not fully resolved, with a Project Lead Survey respondent highlighting this issue in an open text response, and mentors similarly reported ongoing difficulties in some projects. This indicates that, despite improved joined up working in certain areas (see Enablers to project delivery), engagement with children's social care remained inconsistent. Issues accessing resources, systems and information was reported by a small number of Project Leads in Year 2 and were not supported by focus group participants suggesting these issues were more isolated.

Reach and engagement

Project referrals

The Befriending and Mentoring projects reached a wide range of children and young people across ages, ethnic groups, and cohorts. The programme MI data showed 987 children and young people were referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects in Year 1, and 604 were referred in Year 2 (out of a total N=1,591 children and young people with valid referral dates recorded in the MI data). ³⁴

Across all projects, referrals from professionals were the main referral mechanism, but self-referrals were also possible. Project leads explained that most referrals came from social workers and Personal Advisers as well as wider teams, including social care, children's services and fostering teams. Projects tended to develop and distribute

³⁴ All numbers in were calculated based on valid dates of referral and dates of support started, as recorded in MI returns. In some cases, information was missing or invalid (for example, dates before 21/11/2023 or after 16/02/2026), which means this does not cover all children and young people recorded in the MI data (N=1,977).

communication materials such as posters, flyers, leaflets and booklets to teams and professionals. Projects were promoted to care-experienced young people and those working with them in a range of ways, including:

- community-based outreach activities such as presentations in children's centres
- project leads attending cross-team meetings in different local authority teams
- sharing information about the project with existing networks of partner organisations (via meetings and newsletters), especially when targeting specific cohorts of care-experienced children and young people, these included:
 - Mockingbird programme events for children in foster care
 - UASC teams for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people
 - care leavers forums for care leavers
 - communicating directly with residential homes and supported accommodation to reach children and young people in those settings

Projects tended to have self-referral routes available, but only one project lead said this was fruitful, with others suggesting children and young people rarely self-referred. It was not clear from the qualitative data why this was the case, although promotional activities described by participants largely related to generating referrals through professionals rather than from young people themselves.

I've got to say, over the time [of the project], we've tended to see the referrals do come through the professionals rather than the young people or the other carers. – Project lead (focus group participant)

The Year 1 early findings report found that the uncertainty of funding continuation had a negative impact on referrals, as many projects paused referrals while waiting for the funding decision. Year 2 provided further evidence that referrals had been affected by the late funding decision.

A further challenge for referrals in the first year of delivery was a lack of capacity within local authorities to liaise with children's social care teams to achieve high-quality referrals. In the second year of delivery, a small number of project leads noted that additional resources had been allocated to ensure local authority teams had sufficient time to work with Personal Advisers and social workers to achieve appropriate referrals, building on learning from Year 1.

The MI data allowed us to understand the demographic characteristics of children and young people referred to the Befriending and Mentoring projects, across both Year 1 and Year 2:

- more than half of children and young people were care leavers (56%), and 44% were children in care
- the average age of children and young people was 18 years, with:
 - 2% aged under 10 years
 - 12% aged 11 to 15 years
 - 37% aged 16 to 18 years
 - 49% aged 19 years and over
- there were slightly more males (58%) than females (41%) participating; 1% of participants were identified as 'other'
- more than half of children and young people (58%) identified as White, while children and young people from all other ethnic groups combined accounted for 42% of the cohort
- over a third of children and young people were not in education, employment or training (NEET) (38%), while 26% were in further education, 18% were attending school, 6% were in higher education, and 5% were in other training

Further information about the demographic characteristics of children and young people referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects is provided in Table 16.

Table 16: Demographic characteristics of children and young people participating in Befriending and Mentoring projects

Characteristic	n	Mean/ Percentage
Age group (years)		18 years
Under 10	38	2%
11 to 15	189	12%
16 to 18	591	37%
19+	791	49%
Total (N)	1609	
Sex		
Male	901	58%
Female	632	41%
Other	23	1%
Total (N)		
Ethnicity	1562	N/A
White	909	58%

Characteristic	n	Mean/ Percentage
Ethnic minority background	449	29%
Mixed or multiple ethnic background	109	7%
Other ethnic background	95	6%
Total (N)	1556	
Education, Employment and Training		N/A
Attending school (4 to 16 years)	278	18%
Not in education, employment, or training	572	38%
Further education (age 16+)	389	26%
Employed	110	7%
Higher education (age 18+)	88	6%
Other training (18+)	73	5%
Total (N)	1510	
Care status		
In care	706	44%
Care leaver	902	56%
Total (N)	1608	

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

The MI data explored the number of placements/housing arrangements children and young people involved in Befriending and Mentoring projects had in the previous 12 months (see Table A10). Data showed:

- the average number of changes to placements/housing arrangements children and young people experienced in the past 12 months was **1.6**; most children and young people stayed in one placement/housing arrangement in the last 12 months (60%)
- more than a quarter of children and young people had experienced living in 2 placements in the last 12 months (27%); a small proportion of children and young people experienced living in 3 placements/housing arrangements (10%), with less than 1% experiencing 7 or more placements in the last 12 months

It is worth noting that the demographic composition of children and young people engaging with Befriending and Mentoring projects has not changed much over time. The above findings align well with the demographic characteristics reported in the Year 1 early findings report.

Lastly, the demographic characteristics of Children and Young People Survey respondents were also analysed and compared against the MI data. Overall, survey respondents participating in Befriending and Mentoring projects were similar to children and young people recorded in the MI returns, although some minor differences were identified:

- there was a near even split between male (52%) and female (48%) respondents (compared to slightly more males in the MI)
- the majority of survey respondents were White (73%), which was higher than the proportion of children and young people represented in the MI (58%)
- there were some differences in terms of age, especially comparing baseline respondents to the MI, as respondents were all aged 11 to 17 years (57%) and care leavers (43%)

Annex 6: Children and Young People Survey: Additional data and tables provides further information.

Participation and engagement

Based on the MI and qualitative data, the following section sets out the extent to which children and young people took up Befriending and Mentoring support after being referred to a project, and what that support looked like for those who were engaged.

Overall, of children and young people who were referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects:

- 83% participated to some extent ³⁵
- 17% did not participate
- 14% had been referred to the programme but had not progressed to being matched with or introduced to their mentor
- 3% had not engaged yet
- almost half of children and young people (45%) had started the programme and were receiving support

The time it took to match children and young people with a mentor and start support varied considerably. Analysis of projects' MI data found that the average duration between a child or young person being referred and support starting was 40 days (around 5 weeks). This varied considerably across individual children and young people, with a range from 0 days (the same day) to 616 days. The majority of children and young people (67%) waited up to 30 days for support to start, while almost all children and young people waited up to 180 days (95%, N=1,223). There were very few instances (the remaining 5%) where children and young people waited for support to start for longer than 180 days. Additional qualitative feedback collected through the MI template provided insights into why some

³⁵ Participated excludes "not engaged" and "referred but not started yet" and includes started receiving support, paused, withdrawn, paused but re-started etc.

children and young people had been referred but had not started receiving support. Reasons included waiting for children and young people to respond to the invitation to match with a mentor; not wanting to engage/withdrawing; mental health issues/personal circumstances; availability of mentors; liaising with the local authority regarding potential engagement in 2025/26; among other reasons.

The data shows that overall, 24% of children and young people withdrew from their Befriending and Mentoring project, with a tenth (10%) completing the support. A small proportion of children and young people did not engage in the support (3%) or paused participation (3%). It is worth noting that the percentage of children and young people who withdrew increased since the end of Year 1 from 10% to 24%. Those who withdrew were slightly different in terms of demographic characteristics compared to the overall Befriending and Mentoring sample and compared to those completing the programme. On average those who withdrew were:

- slightly older (19 years old compared to those completing being 17)
- mostly care leavers (70% of those withdrawn were care leavers compared to 36% of those completing the programme)
- 47% of those who withdrew were not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 23% of those completing the programme

Reasons for children and young people withdrawing from Befriending and Mentoring projects mostly included a lack of engagement and interest in participating in the programme. Additional reasons included language barriers, moving out of area and mental health issues.

Table 17: Status of engagement with Befriending and Mentoring projects (as of December 2025)

Status	n	Percent
Referred to programme but not started yet	233	14%
Started programme and receiving support	733	45%
Withdrawn from programme	394	24%
Previously withdrawn but re-started	13	1%
Participation paused	42	3%
Not engaged	44	3%

Status	n	Percent
Completed programme	157	10%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data
N=1,616

Analysis of the MI data showed the proportions of children and young people who had progressed through each Befriending and Mentoring support milestone (N=1,462):³⁶

- less than one-third (31%) had not yet participated
- 5% completed a needs assessment or planning session
- 14% were matched with their mentor
- 10% had been introduced to their mentor
- 39% met with their mentor regularly

The MI data showed the average duration of support for children and young people in the programme³⁷ was 215 days (approximately 7 months), but this ranged from 0 (where a child or young person had started support but then not engaged) to 637 days. Almost half of children and young people (45%) experienced up to 180 days of support, while more than a third (36%) experienced between 6 months and a year of support (180-365 days), and 19% experienced more than a year of support (N=483).

Over a quarter (27%) of children and young people had weekly contact with their mentor in the past quarter, while relatively smaller proportions had fortnightly (12%), monthly (8%), or twice-weekly (3%) contact (n=1,519).³⁸ Lastly, a third of children and young people (33%) participated in Befriending and Mentoring group activities (41% did not, while 26% were “not applicable”, n=1,452) – further information about project models of delivery is provided in Project design.

Most children and young people (80%) participated in only a Befriending and Mentoring project, with a small proportion of children and young people participating in Family Findings as well - 1% of those in Befriending and Mentoring projects also participated in

³⁶ This data represents the furthest point in the programme reached by the child or young person, regardless of their current engagement. For example, a child or young person who began receiving support and had been introduced to their mentor but had since withdrawn would have their status as ‘withdrawn’ on the latest MI data, and progress as ‘been introduced to their mentor’. As a result, the figures relating to progress may not directly correlate with current status.

³⁷ This metric was calculated based on the difference between the date support started and the date support ended. However, there were inconsistencies in the data and so these figures should be taken as a guide only.

³⁸ This metric was not applicable for half of children and young people (50%) who were participating at this stage – this is to be expected as many had not yet engaged with support (see Table 14).

Family Finding projects. There were a number of children and young people (18%) where their participation in other projects was unknown.

Enablers of engagement

Project leads, staff and mentors reported a wide range of facilitating factors for successfully engaging children and young people across the Befriending and Mentoring projects. While approaches to maintaining ongoing engagement varied across projects, it worked well when approaches were young person led, relational and grounded in a strong understanding of children and young people's motivations. Importantly, being flexible and adaptable to accommodate children and young people's changing needs and preferences was crucial.

Building trust

Qualitative data showed that building trust and rapport with children and young people from the outset was essential for engagement. For some projects, holding initial introductions between mentors and children and young people in person worked well, particularly where project leads or coordinators facilitated (such as if they had an established rapport with a young person). This helped ease the young people into their mentorship.

Young people just turn up because they want to be around their trusted people. But it's all relational...build a trusted reciprocal, respectful relationship: that is what gives you that engagement. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

Building trusting relationships with mentors was important across cohorts as this underpinned mentees' engagement and their willingness to speak openly. Project staff and mentors noted that for some young people, previous experiences of feeling let down by professionals likely contributed to their mistrust of 'the system'. This meant that mentors often needed to dedicate time at the start of the mentorship to get to know the young people before supporting them with their goals or aspirations. For example, for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, their level of trust was often shaped by factors like being newly arrived and introduced to multiple professionals within a short period of time, as well as communication and language barriers.

Building on this, reliability and consistency in interactions with mentees (if this is what young people want) were key to maintaining a trusting relationship with mentors. Principally, project staff and mentors emphasised that communication with mentees outside scheduled sessions, such as through text messaging or WhatsApp, was key to helping children and young people engage and mitigated potential participation obstacles.

I think just being really just being really consistent I think is the only and continuing check insurance can help face those barriers. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

Tailored support

A strong enabler for engagement was shaping mentoring around children and young people's needs and preferences. Mentors recognised the need to meet project objectives, but some noted that in practice, they needed to adopt a young person led approach to support them more holistically. This meant listening to children and young people's stories, their motivations and understanding what they were going through in the present.

I suppose the key to it is to listen to [children and young people] very carefully and to very quickly work out: what is it that they want from you really? Why do they come along? ... Making [mentoring] worth their while to come along. You know they've committed their time - they've travelled there and it's [up to us] to make it worthwhile for them to come along and that you do actually deliver something which they want. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

It was important for mentors to create space for young people to feel a sense of control, ensuring that their objectives align with what is important to them rather than being prescribed by the programme's or project's goals. This was particularly important for children and young people not in education, employment or training, as mentors found that it was best to avoid labelling them as 'NEET' or discussing their education and employment status directly. Rather, it worked well to meet individuals where they are, invest in their immediate needs, and gradually explore future aspirations, recognising that for some, it takes a lot to leave their house and engage with others.

Shared identity and experience

The qualitative findings showed that a shared identity or lived experience between mentors and mentees was important to some children and young people. This was linked to their preference for support from a mentor who could understand their backgrounds. Examples included wanting to be supported by a male mentor (for example, due to a lack of a male role model in their life) or having a mentor of the same religion, cultural or similar family background. In one project, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people were supported by mentors who had themselves been a former UASC, which helped build trust and offered them a relatable role model. Project leads, staff and mentors explained that meeting these needs and preferences helped young people stay engaged because young people felt comfortable opening up to their mentors:

They [the young person] approached me ... because of course they can see that I'm from a Muslim background, and they felt also comfortable to have the conversation with me. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

Offering incentives and celebrating achievements

Some project staff and mentors reported that providing vouchers, food and refreshments (particularly for group activities) helped keep children and young people engaged. Additionally, some noted that taking the time to acknowledge and celebrate young

people's progress and achievements helped boost young people's confidence and keep them motivated. This was important, especially for children and young people who were experiencing low self-esteem and who may have otherwise engaged less with the programme.

Barriers to engagement

Project leads, staff and mentors explained how children and young people's engagement could be disrupted by a range of factors. It is worth noting that these barriers varied across projects and cohorts but often intersected with wider instability in young people's lives. As such, almost a quarter (24%) of young people paused their engagement and, in a few cases, some disengaged completely. The project MI shows that a higher withdrawal rate was observed in the Year 2 MI data than in Year 1.

Practical barriers

Across projects, limited public transport options and geographical location were barriers for some children and young people, particularly those in rural or remote areas. This limited the opportunity for face-to-face engagement.

[Young person is] from [south England], I'm from the Northeast of England, so it's... I can't like pop over the road and meet up with them. It's all online. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

On the other hand, some children and young people lacked safe spaces to talk; the digital devices needed, or a stable internet connection, which limited their ability to engage digitally. These barriers made it difficult to maintain consistent mentoring relationships. In one example, it also led to delays in contact between the young person and mentor, which exacerbated the young person's anxiety.

Instability caused by placement moves and life changes

Frequent placement moves and other changing circumstances were reported as key barriers to engagement. This applied particularly to care leavers who lived independently or unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people who had unstable placements. Some project leads noted that although these children and young people often showed initial enthusiasm to engage in mentoring, their engagement tended to drop off due to wider pressures. In some cases, this drop-off was coupled with project activities not closely matching their interests or needs.

We can have something going really, really well. Engagement and regular sessions and the growth of confidence and skills and everything's going really, really well. And then placement breaks down and they've got to move and we've lost it completely. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

The qualitative data suggested that for some children and young people such as those experiencing placement moves, transitioning into independent lives and unaccompanied

asylum seeking children and young people, once they disengaged part way through the programme, it was difficult to re-engage them. This was largely linked to young people juggling competing demands on their time and capacity, but structural barriers may also have been pivotal.

We get a lot of placement moves. So, a young person might be in one area...and then for whatever reason they've moved somewhere else and that's had to pause things for a little while. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

Competing priorities and limited emotional capacity

Children and young people across cohorts faced a range of competing priorities in their lives that affected whether they engaged. Generally, this included activities that took up a substantial proportion of their time, such as beginning education, community activities or employment, or for older young people, managing the demands of living more independently. In some cases, children and young people were also being supported by different services and interventions, meaning that they had limited time to engage with mentoring as well.

Projects working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people noted difficulties in engaging individuals recently arrived in the UK, as they often received extensive support from a range of professionals, coupled with settling into education or employment and learning English, and could feel overwhelmed. Conversely, project staff and mentors identified challenges in maintaining engagement with care leavers, who typically had limited professional support for coordination and reminders, and may be more likely to face competing priorities such as employment and financial concerns (including housing and travel expenses).

In one example, a young person was not in education, employment, or training, struggled to engage because of their poor mental health (linked to being unemployed) and due to this, they felt they did not have the emotional capacity to engage with their mentor.

There were a few examples of young people who withdrew from the project entirely because they did not feel it was the right time for them. In such cases, operating an 'open door' policy helped mentees to re-engage when the time was right. Several projects made it clear to children and young people that they could pause their participation and come back when they had the time, emotional capacity and felt more settled in their lives.

Language and communication barriers

Some projects that sought to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people observed that mentees with limited English language skills sometimes struggled to engage due to communication barriers. Indeed, some mentors reported that the (UASC) young person they were supporting did not understand why they had been referred for this support. Furthermore, the communication between young people and their mentor was

often slow and caused frustration, despite using tools like Google Translate or interpretation services. Some mentors noted that supporting basic language development was challenging, time intensive, and limited the time available for mentoring support.

Safeguarding concerns

In some projects where there were additional safeguarding considerations, projects took extra care to ensure mentoring was safe and appropriate for both mentor and mentee. In one example, a mentor was reluctant to meet in person due to safety concerns linked to the mentee's history of court appearances for possession of weapons, highlighting the need for robust safeguarding measures. In other examples, engagement had to pause where young people entered specialist mental health provision or custody. Project leads and staff described maintaining contact with young people where appropriate, but actioned a necessary break in mentoring support as needed. For example, in one instance, there was a safeguarding concern where a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) was involved, which led to pausing a young person's engagement.

Early outcomes

Key findings

The findings presented provide insights into how children and young people appeared to benefit from the Befriending and Mentoring projects based on the MI data, Children and Young People Survey data and qualitative insights. Findings are grouped thematically around the intended outcomes set out in the programme's Theories of Change.

Reported benefits for children and young people

- Based on MI data analysis, compared with before the Befriending and Mentoring projects started, there was an increase in the number of connections/relationships children and young people had with important people in their lives. On average, this was a statistically significant increase of 1.3 connections/relationships.
- There was a minor positive difference in children and young people's positivity about their future between baseline and endline survey findings, as well as tentative evidence suggesting that children and young people felt less lonely after taking part in Befriending and Mentoring projects, demonstrating signs of promise.
- Qualitative evidence suggests that many children and young people benefited from trusted, consistent mentoring relationships, particularly in terms of

confidence, feeling supported, and reduced isolation, even where quantitative changes were not statistically detectable.

- Given the young-person-led nature of many projects and the diversity of intended outcomes, not all benefits were expected to be captured by standardised survey measures.
- Other survey findings showed potential improvements such as children and young people feeling more settled at home at endline, feeling safer at home at endline, feeling that they belong more in their local area at endline, feeling safer in their local area at endline, having a trusted adult and feeling like they are getting help with their feelings at endline. However, after adjusting for more stringent statistical significance threshold, these differences were no longer statistically significant, indicating that the findings are not robust.
- It is important to note that the Children and Young People Survey data presented with some limitations, mainly due to low responses. Small samples could mean survey respondents are not entirely representative of the population and meant that matched (baseline-endline) samples were smaller. This limited the ability to detect statistically significant differences using paired significance tests.

This section provides insights into how children and young people may be benefitting from Befriending and Mentoring projects, in relation to the intended outcome areas set out in the ToC. Findings are based on the MI data (as reported by project staff), the Children and Young People Survey, and qualitative research.

It is important to note that, as discussed earlier in the report (see Project design), Befriending and Mentoring projects were designed to meet a variety of different local outcomes for different target cohorts of children and young people. For example, some projects worked explicitly with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, so desired outcomes might be centred around improving English or navigating life in the UK. Others were focused on supporting young people to progress into education and employment. In addition, outcomes were often specific to the child or young person with mentees identifying what they hoped to gain from the mentoring. This ranged from meeting new people and building confidence, to acquiring practical skills such as cooking and budgeting. All children and young people interviewed identified different motivations for taking part and different things that they had gained as a result.

Some projects encouraged children and young people to set their own goals and desired outcomes from the mentoring, whereas others were more prescribed by the project. One project described using a list of 3 to 6 areas of focus from which children and young

people could select based on what they most wanted to gain from their mentoring. Therefore, it was not expected that all children and young people would achieve all outcomes. Whilst the quantitative data sought to measure key outcomes for all children and young people, the qualitative fieldwork highlighted the challenges of using standardised outcomes measurement when projects are intrinsically young person led.

The data provides encouraging insights about the programme's aims in relation to the key outcome areas set out in the ToC (subject to the limitations set out in 'Children and Young People Survey'; Limitations of the evaluation and Annex 3: Monitoring information (MI) data collection, cleaning and analysis and Annex 3: Limitations of the MI data). Throughout this section, Children and Young People Survey results are reported in brackets as (baseline% - endline%).

(Re)connections with important people in their lives (Befriending and Mentoring)

For Befriending and Mentoring projects, MI analysis showed that the number of connections/relationships with important people in children and young people's lives increased on average by 1.3, which was a statistically significant increase. It is also worth noting that this difference has slightly increased compared to the Year 1 early findings report, which was 1.02. However, it is important to note that an increase in connections was not a primary outcome for Befriending in Mentoring projects in the same way as Family Finding. Although some projects offered group activities, the primary focus was usually on developing a 1:1 relationship between mentee and mentor.

Table 18: Average number of connections/relationships before and after Befriending and Mentoring

Connections	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Before	3.04	2.3	0	17
After	4.38	2.5	0	18
Difference	1.3*			

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

N=277 (=sub-sample of only those who have participated already with Befriending and Mentoring projects)³⁹

‘*’ means a statistically significant difference at the 5% level or lower

³⁹ This was defined based on their current programme status, as provided in the MI data. Children and young people with a status of “not engaged” or “referred to programme but not started yet” were excluded, therefore producing a sample of those that have already engaged with the programme in some form (started the programme, started but paused, started but withdrawn, previously withdrawn but restarted, and completed the programme).

Participants involved in the qualitative fieldwork emphasised how, through sustained positive engagement (highlighted in Reach and engagement), mentors connected with mentees and established a new relationship. Qualitative (open text) feedback provided through the MI echoed these findings. Comments indicated that many children and young people had built strong bonds with their mentors and begun achieving their set goals. For some mentees, simply participating in the programme and meeting with their mentor regularly was considered to be a key outcome for them, particularly where they may have previously struggled with social interactions or lacked confidence in meeting new people.

The progress is [...] perhaps less tangible than you'd expect from a normal mentoring or coaching programme, because getting [them] to follow up month to month is tough, but actually it's more around watching this, this young [person] grow and really develop his own confidence and if meeting up for a coffee, you know, once a month is part of that, then that that's the outcome – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

So you might have a young person who won't come out of the bedroom, and for them the impact is they've opened the door and said hello to somebody and they've made that connection, whereas somebody who's very outgoing and confident and will, yeah, that wouldn't be a problem for them – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

However, some challenges which impacted children and young people's engagement with the programme were also reported in the MI qualitative feedback. These included instances where children and young people adjusted or withdrew their participation as part of managing their own needs, priorities, or circumstances. This included when children and young people faced individual challenges, such as mental health and medical issues; addiction and substance abuse; criminal exploitation; domestic abuse; young parenthood; language barriers; housing instability; or wider personal circumstances. These issues impacted the timely provision of mentoring support to children and young people.

Projects where there were group activities encouraged the development of new relationships beyond just the one-to-one support provided by a mentor. Mentors involved in the qualitative fieldwork reflected that with their encouragement and support, they had observed that, over time, mentees who were previously shy, lacking in confidence, or experiencing social anxiety, had been able to connect with other children and young people through the group activities.

For...my young person, the biggest, the biggest change was getting them out the house and getting them to the hub, getting them to chill with other people and make new friends. And [they've] done that. [They] does that regularly. Now it's fantastic. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

[Name] has encouraged me to attend the group sessions, I have made a few friends. I trust [them]. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

Peer mentoring relationship

One young person interviewed described how they did not have a specific goal when they first participated in mentoring, they just wanted someone who they could speak to for advice and support. The young person was drawn to the opportunity of having a peer mentor as they thought it would be good to connect with someone who had similar experiences - specifically, the young person wanted to spend time with someone who could relate to their situation and emotions. They were struggling with the transition of becoming a care leaver and wanted guidance from someone who had navigated similar challenges. Being matched with a peer mentor gave them someone to speak to about these things who could really understand what they were going through.

Relationships and sources of support

Most children and young people who responded to the Children and Young People Survey reported having a good friend (70% - 58%), and a trustworthy adult (85% - 94%) in their lives. The latter was marginally statistically significant ($p=0.04$), suggesting a potential improvement, however further statistical tests did not validate the robustness of this finding. Most respondents reported:

- they had someone who listens to them (93% - 97%)
- someone that tells them they have done well (92% - 96%)
- someone that believes they will be a success (96% - 95%)

Survey findings were mixed in terms of relationships and contact between children and young people with their immediate family. Fewer than half of children and young people reported feeling that contact with either parent (49% - 29%) was right, although feeling that contact was right seemed to be higher with Mums (38% - 25%) and siblings (27% - 41%) compared to Dads (21% - 9%).

These findings were echoed in the qualitative (free-text) comments in the Children and Young People's Survey. Respondents were asked at both baseline and endline if there was anything else they wanted to say about how much they saw their family and important people in their lives. Whilst some respondents described being happy with the current level of contact, others reported wanting to see family members more.

I would like to see some of my family more than what I do right now, also I would like to explore my family more and actually learn who I've got in my family and discover my extended family more. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

Most survey Children and Young People Survey respondents also reported they sometimes/always worry about their feelings or behaviour (73% - 85%), however they also reported receiving help from an adult for this (69% - 87%). The latter was statistically significant ($p=0.01$), suggesting a potential improvement between baseline and endline, however further statistical tests did not validate the robustness of this finding.

Lastly, a very small minority of children and young people reported receiving no support from anyone in their lives (0% - 3%). There were no statistically significant differences in any of the above questions between baseline and endline surveys (see Table A12 for all baseline and endline comparisons).

The Year 2 evaluation found consistent evidence that mentors were identified as providing key support at an important moment in a young person's life:

- interviewees agreed that mentors were a consistent, positive adult presence, which was something many care-experienced young people may have lacked
- qualitative comments in the MI template indicated that as some children and young people faced various challenges, including health/mental health issues, gaps in social care support, and/or disrupted home lives, mentors played a crucial role in providing support, helping to build confidence, and helping children and young people navigate these challenges
- in the Children and Young People Survey respondents were asked how their mentor/befriender had helped them. All of the 62 respondents who provided a written comment at endline expressed positive views of the mentoring support they had received.
 - young people talked about the ways in which their mentors supported them and enjoyed the activities that they were taken to
 - young people felt mentors were understanding and happy to hear them out, helped them build confidence and were always there for them
 - a few young people mentioned the positive impact the presence of their mentor had on their mental health, as well as the support they offered with school or college and with administrative tasks, as one young person explained:

She has helped me to accept who I am, she helps me with my mental health, she reassures me that I'll be okay, she makes me laugh, she makes me look forward to seeing her, feels like my best friend. – *Child or young person (survey respondent)*

Young people, project staff and volunteers described how, in some instances, the mentor had become the young person's go-to person for support, often being preferred to other professionals or more formal support such as a Personal Adviser or careers advisor.

[They] knows that [they] can always call me and I will always arrange if I can't be there, I'll arrange someone to be there. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

We've got mentors in place who've been there with young people when they've been going through some extremely traumatic experiences. Victims of crime becoming homeless. And actually, we know there's PAs [Personal Advisers] to support, we know there's social workers to support, but I think everybody will realise that that's a very stretched resource. So having mentors with the established relationship that's trusted can actually really help those young people to face those challenges...with a trusted a trusted and safe adult ... it is about preventing homelessness, it is about sitting with them as the police interview them for a victim statement. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

The qualitative data provided strong and consistent evidence that children and young people having a source of support outside of formal structures was important. Relationships with professional services sometimes felt fraught or evoked complex feelings for children and young people; mentors were considered to be more neutral. Mentors were also able to take on a different and sometimes more informal role in a young person's life, which made them feel more approachable. In addition, it was reflected that for some young people knowing that the mentor was choosing to spend time with them, as a volunteer rather than a paid staff member, made them feel valued.

What we're seeing here is that it's all about their confidence build. It's really impacting on their belief, someone else believing in them... This is a real big key for them, like we wouldn't think it. But knowing that they've got somebody out there that's supporting them that's not paid is really, really strong for these young people because it's humbling. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

Positive relationship with mentor

As part of the matching process, one project encouraged young people to meet and speak with several mentors to determine who would be a good match for them. One young person who had experienced this process, felt it they had a good match with their mentor because the mentor had spent time getting to know them, and the interviewee felt their mentor really understood them.

She takes time and she understands what I mean and things, wants to get to know me and things. – *Young person*

This positive relationship meant the mentor became a source of support for the young person. They provided practical support such as help with budgeting and finding a new phone contract, as well as emotional support.

I like the fact that I've got someone I can always talk to whenever I'm having a bad day.– *Young person*

The young person and their mentor spoke on the phone every few days, talking about how their day had gone and what they have been up to. The young person felt that their mentor understood them better than their Personal Adviser and always said the right thing to make them feel better.

I would get the same advice, but it's just better because [Mentor] understands me better. – *Young person*

Through these experiences it was also felt that mentors could demonstrate to mentees that there was someone 'in their corner'. For unaccompanied asylum seeking mentees, this was particularly important.

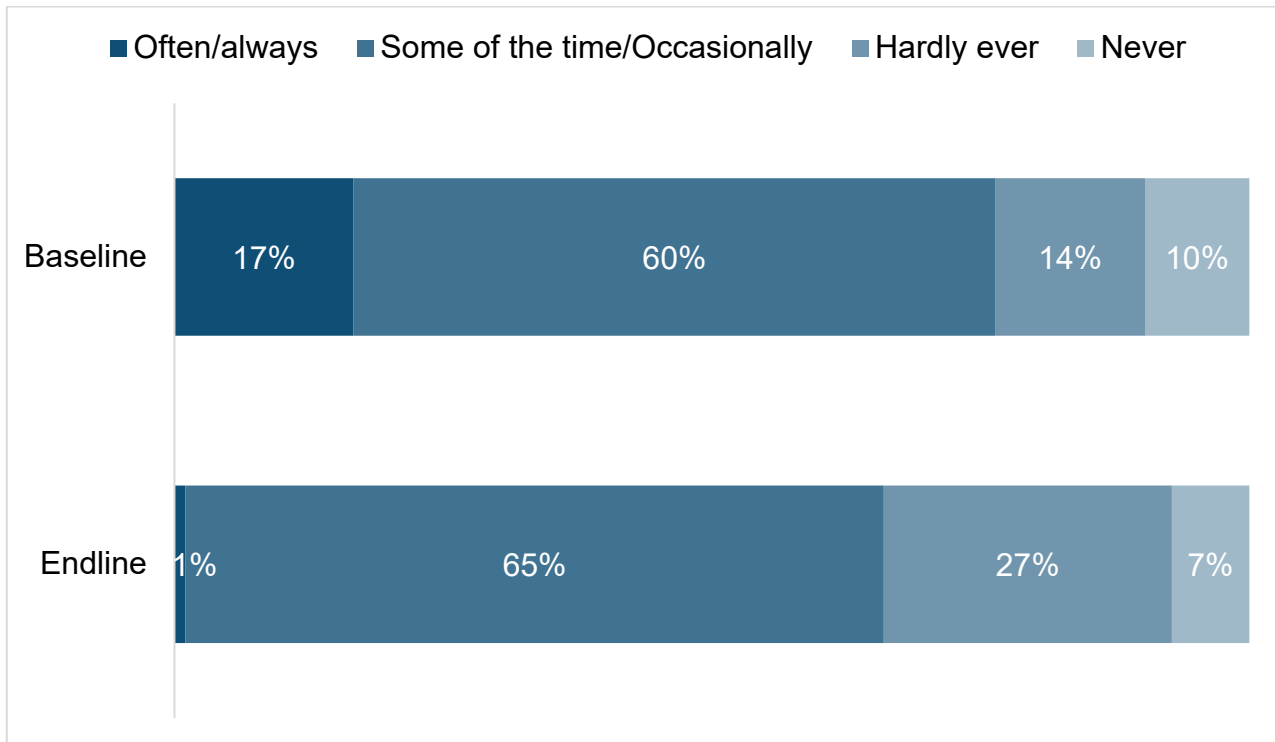
I think that's important for [them] to know that there are people on [their] side ... as a young person now living in a country that is so divided politically – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

Feelings of loneliness

There is tentative evidence to suggest that children and young people felt less lonely after taking part in the Befriending and Mentoring programme. As shown in Figure 6, just 1% of participants felt lonely after taking part in the Befriending and Mentoring programme compared with 17% at baseline. This question was asked of all children and young people aged 11 and over, including care leavers. At baseline, 57% of respondents were aged 11 to 17 years, and 43% were care leavers. At endline, 98% were aged 11 to 17 years, and just 2% were care leavers. As the baseline and endline samples differed in terms of the age composition, we also ran a sensitivity test with just the 11 to 17-year-olds sample. The

statistically significant difference was maintained in a sensitivity test with just 11 to 17-year-olds ($p=0.04$), although not when using the smaller comparative p value for multiple tests (see Table A12 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

Figure 6 Felt lonely in the last few weeks at baseline (N=72) and endline (N=97)



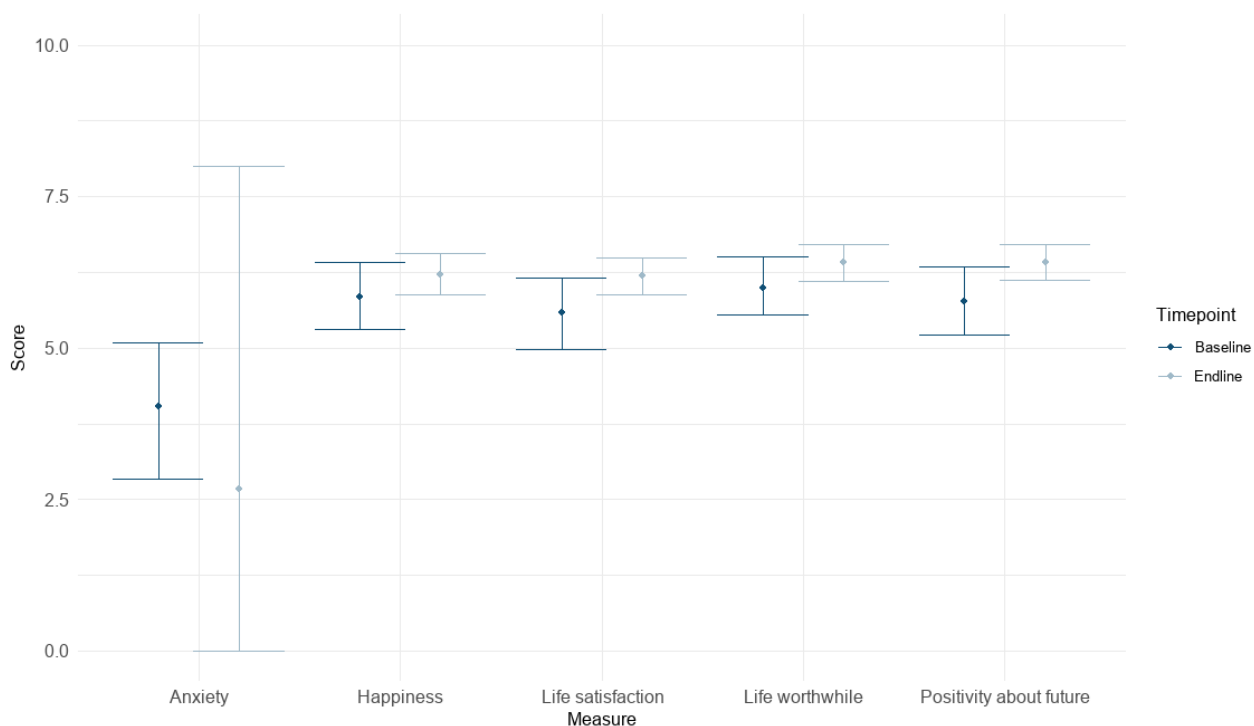
Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Children and young people's wellbeing

As shown in Figure 6 and reported in Table 19, there were no statistically significant differences in wellbeing scores between baseline and endline for Befriending and Mentoring participants. Again, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as sample sizes were small, so it is possible that genuine changes in wellbeing occurred but were not detectable given the limited number of observations.

There was a positive difference in children and young people's positivity about the future from baseline to endline, which was borderline statistically significant ($p=0.05$), demonstrating signs of promise. As reported in Table A22, 25% of the baseline sample reported low levels of positivity about the future, compared with 8% of the endline sample.

Figure 7 Forest plot with mean score and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for Befriending and Mentoring participants' responses to wellbeing questions at baseline and endline for 11- to 17-year-olds and care leavers



Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table 19 Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11- to 17-year-olds and care leavers) responses wellbeing questions at baseline and endline - significance testing based on sample

Wellbeing measure	N	Baseline mean score (SD)	Endline mean score (SD)	Sig. (p)
Anxiety	35	4.0 (3.3)	2.7 (4.6)	0.66
Happiness	168	5.9 (2.5)	6.2 (1.7)	0.27
Life satisfaction	168	5.6 (2.6)	6.2 (1.6)	0.08
Life worthwhile	167	6.0 (2.2)	6.4 (1.5)	0.16
Positivity about future	167	5.8 (2.5)	6.4 (1.5)	0.05

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Despite mixed results from the Children and Young People Survey data, the qualitative evidence suggests that some children and young people who participated in Befriending and Mentoring projects experienced increased wellbeing as a result of participation. Mentors reported observing a difference in their mentees after engaging with the project, for example, noting that young people felt more positive generally and/or accessed relevant support for their mental health.

What was quite nice even in that relatively limited time was when I left [their] life, [they were] in a better place. [They were] able to sit through an hour without feeling completely overwhelmed like that. You know, when we did the baseline survey and the midpoint survey and whatever, and [their] scores did go up on that. [They were] more confident, [they were] happier. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

Improved wellbeing

One young person interviewed described how they felt that participating in mentoring had improved their wellbeing, and that having a positive relationship with their mentor had been a key contributor to this. Before taking part, the young person was asked to complete a form with some information about themselves and why they wanted a mentor - this helped the project staff with the matching process and led to a good match between the mentor and the young person. The young person noted that their mentor was easy to talk to and they had things in common.

I feel like honestly that [the matching process] was actually a good thing because she's really nice and I feel I could get along with her really well. – *Young person*

Because of the positive relationship they had established, the young person felt that meeting with their mentor improved their wellbeing and they saw a noticeable change in their mood and energy levels.

Whenever I have my mentoring, I'm like very tired before I have my mentoring sessions, but obviously when I come back, I'm just running around laughing. Just being like a completely different person. So, it's just like click change. – *Young person*

There was also qualitative evidence to support that some mentees had enhanced confidence having taken part in mentoring. For example, one mentor reflected that their mentee had overcome their social anxiety and was much more confident speaking to new people. Others shared examples of young people who were previously quite withdrawn, developing greater confidence and self-belief, enabling them to advocate better for themselves, try new things, and set and achieve personal goals. One young person said:

Everyone's always saying, oh, your confidence is coming on lovely – *Child or young person (interview participant)*

Consistent, supportive relationships were considered to be key in contributing to improved confidence.

Identity and belonging

Most children and young people reported feeling safe (67% - 81%) and settled (47% - 66%) at home, across baseline and endline surveys respectively. Statistically significant differences were initially identified (at the 5% level), indicating potential improvement on these outcome measures. However, after adjusting for multiple testing using a more stringent significance threshold, these differences are no longer statistically significant, indicating that the findings are not robust (for more information about additional testing, see Annex - Children and Young People Survey).

Most children and young people also reported they had an adult explain to them why they were in care (83% - 76%), across both surveys. Differences between baseline and endline surveys were not statistically significant (see Table A12 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

Sense of community

Most children and young people (93% - 100%), reported they always/sometimes felt safe in their local area, as well as feeling they belong in their local area (81% - 93%) across baseline and endline surveys. Statistically significant differences were initially identified (at the 5% level), indicating potential improvement on these indicators. However, after adjusting for multiple testing using a more stringent significance threshold, these differences are no longer statistically significant, indicating that the findings are not robust (see Table A12 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

There were few qualitative examples around young people's improved sense of community. However, a small number of participants spoke about this happening when a young person and their mentor were matched based on similar characteristics. For example, one mentor described that they had the same heritage as their mentee, and the mentor had been able to facilitate access to their community in a new way.

Wider outcomes

Once engaged and a relationship was established with mentors, mentors worked with children and young people to meet wider outcomes by providing both practical and emotional support and guidance. In this way, the trusted relationship established through the mentoring was an intermediary outcome which facilitated the achievement of wider outcomes, as set out in the Theories of Change.

The biggest thing we've found is getting them to engage is kind of the easiest bit being it helped them to sustain it. It's with key. Without that mentor, I would say 50% of the people we work with wouldn't have sustained what they're what they're doing. So, it's really, really key having that advocate, that person they trust and just to be there to support them every step of the way. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

The data suggested that those engaging with mentors had gained skills in various areas, such as improving English language skills and building healthy lifestyle habits (such as gym membership), as well as engaging in a variety of different activities (such as cooking, gardening, and football). These reported outcomes were often attributed to the support and guidance provided by mentors, as one mentor explained:

We've managed to keep people from being made homeless by going through like the tenancy agreement and adhering to it and just giving them life talks and adulthood talks. – *Mentor (focus group participant)*

In addition to support from mentors, some projects also provided specific tailored support, advice and signposting for children and young people to help them reach wider goals. For example, projects targeting unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people provided additional support around accessing legal advice and those working with young people who were not in education, employment or training provided tailored advice around education and employment opportunities.

Me and my colleague will do a lot of background work finding training, apprenticeships, any sort of other really tailored things. So once our provider has found out what that young person is interested in in pursuing in terms of career or training, we've been doing a lot of work to try and find those opportunities to then be able to send to the mentor so that the mentor could see if the young person is interested in being able in applying to these things. – *Project lead (focus group participant)*

Education support

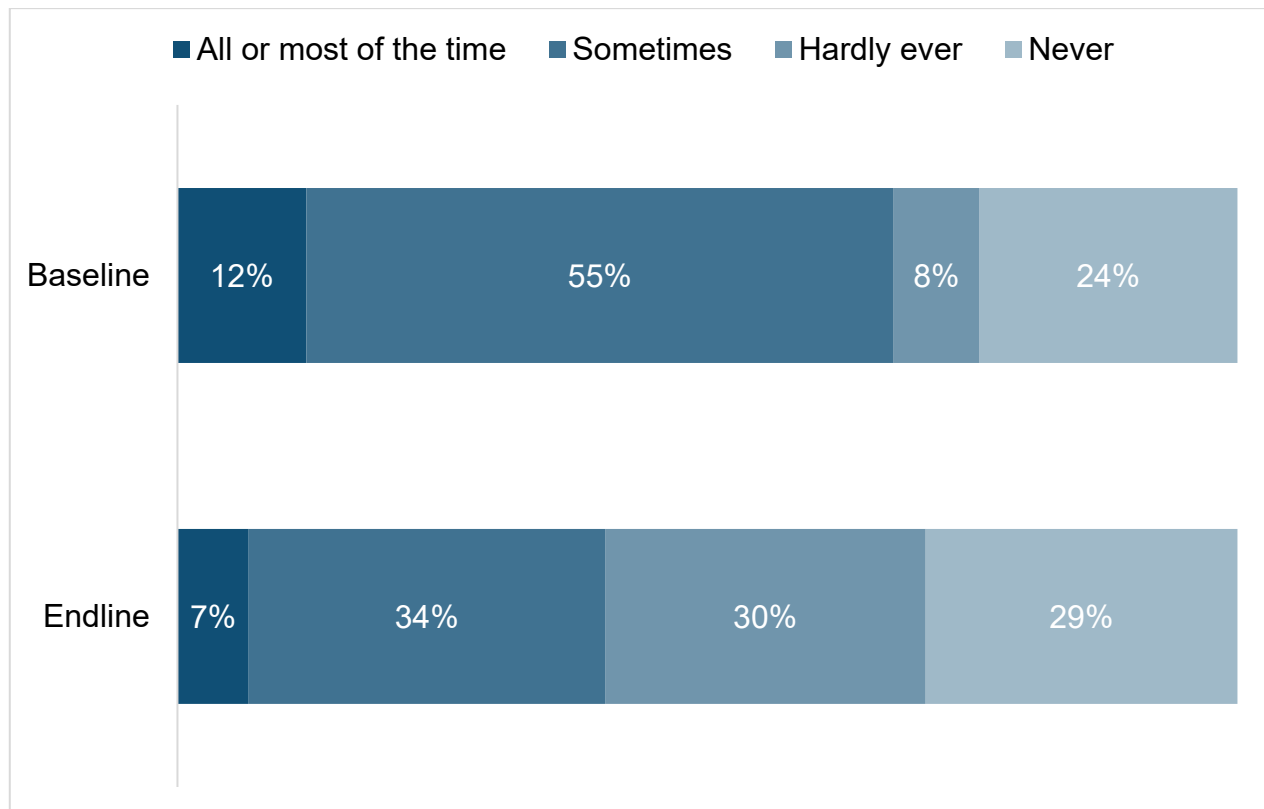
One young person interviewed described how their mentor had been supporting them to meet their wider goals around education and employment. As a working parent, they wanted to progress in their career but needed specific qualifications to progress. They built a good relationship with their mentor and felt they got on really well.

It's just nice to talk to someone and just go out. – *Young person*

With an awareness of the young person's goals, the mentor supported them to get their qualifications. They reached out to several colleges to find out more information about different courses and then helped the young person to narrow down their choices by, for example, considering practical issues such as travel and what would work best alongside the young person's current job and parenting responsibilities.

The Children and Young People survey included a range of questions which sought to explore wider outcomes for participants. As shown in Figure 8, over half (68%) of participants felt that they 'always' or 'sometimes' got the chance to do similar things to their friends at baseline, compared with 40% at endline. This question was asked of all children and young people aged 8 years and over, including care leavers. At baseline, 57% of respondents to this question were aged 11 to 17 years, and 43% were care leavers. At endline, 18% were aged 8 to 11 years, 80% were aged 11 to 17 years, and 3% were care leavers. As the baseline and endline samples differed in terms of the age composition, the evaluation team ran a sensitivity test with the 11 to 17-year-olds sample to enable a more balanced comparison of the 2 timepoints – for the 11 to 17-year-olds alone, the difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.06$). This could suggest that the difference is sensitive to sample composition and may in part reflect differences in demographic characteristics of baseline and endline samples rather than a change associated with participation in Befriending and Mentoring projects.

Figure 8 Get chance to do similar things to friends at baseline (N=74) and endline (N=119)



Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Additionally, most children and young people reported liking school (aged 11 to 17 years) (66% - 81%) and frequently getting outdoors (64% - 56%), across baseline and endline surveys respectively. Most children and young people also reported often/always getting to practice life skills (83% - 69%) and were particularly positive about spending time on hobbies or activities (91% - 90%) and enjoying their time (91% - 90%). Differences in the above questions between baseline and endline surveys were not statistically significant (see Table A12 for all baseline-endline comparisons).

Life skills

One young person interviewed described how they did not have any say in who their mentor was, but that the match was great and someone they got along well with. As they got to know each other organically over time, the young person felt that they built a strong rapport and got to know each other well.

After I'd been there for a couple of sessions, I was like, I wouldn't have another mentor because he's my type of person. – *Young person*

The mentor had since been helping the young person to develop their confidence and everyday skills. For example, by encouraging them to order food when out in a restaurant and helping them to access work experience.

I'm scared of a lot of things that you need in life. Like, I don't know how to cook, so he's supposed to be teaching me that. I don't know how to get on public transport, but I'm scared, so he's teaching me that as well and all sorts of basic life stuff. – *Young person*

Economic evaluation

Key findings

- Sixty-three per cent of allocated funds were spent in the first 3 financial quarters of Year 2.
- Given the anticipated spend for Q4, the 2025/26 financial year total is likely to be an underspend. It is anticipated that about 88% of allocated funding will be spent, but this may be overestimated due to missing Q4 data.
- The average cost per child or young person supported was £2,978, and this was largely the same regardless of the number of children and young people reached.
- Based on this early evidence, the estimated value from enhanced relationships and reducing loneliness were not sufficient for the projects to be considered value for money, compared to the £2,978 cost per child or young person. However, breakeven analysis suggests projects could represent value for money if wellbeing benefits are realised, with most modelled scenarios exceeding costs.

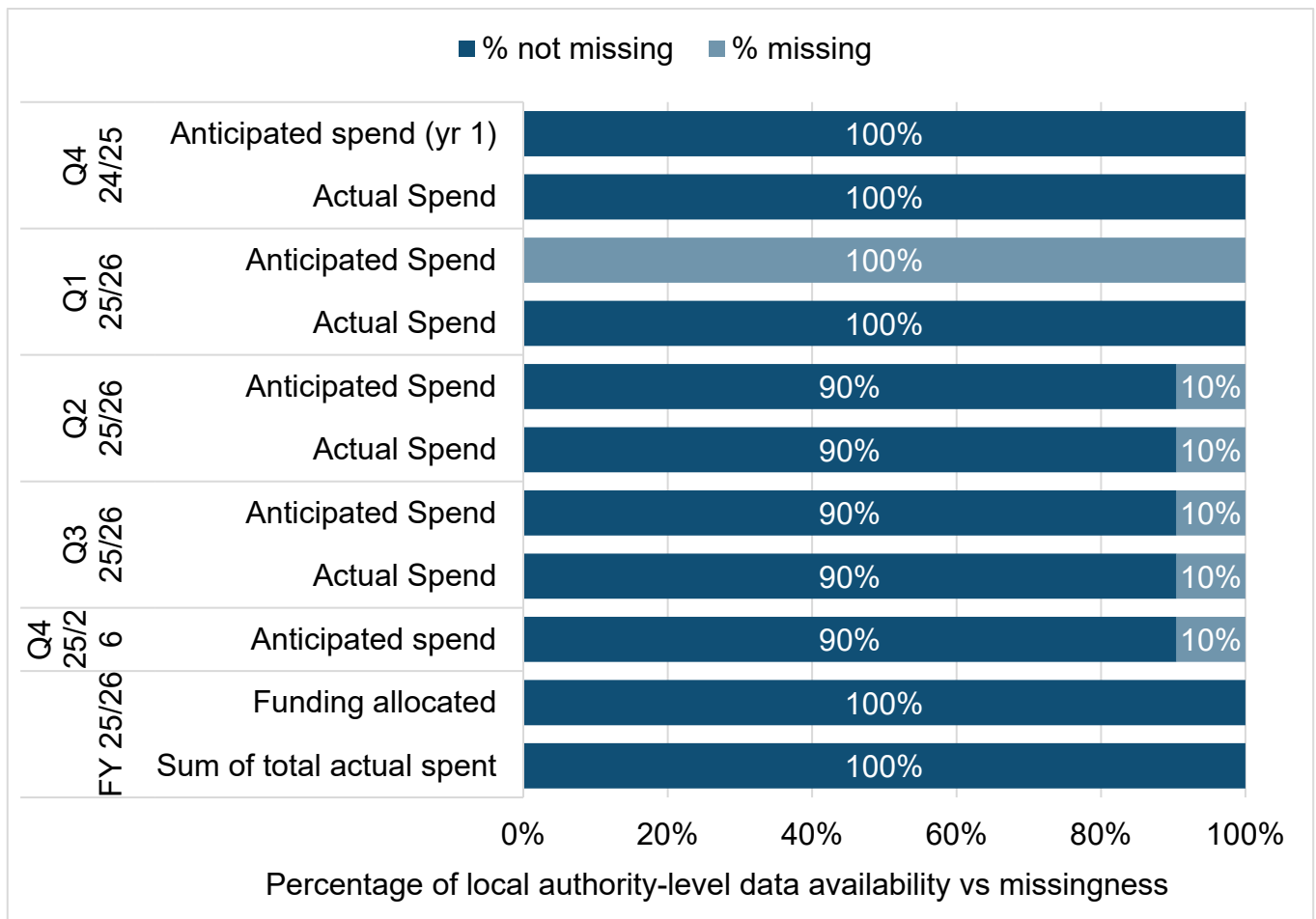
- Caution should be applied when interpreting these findings due to the early nature of the outcomes and economic assessment; the variable quality of the data provided across local authorities; the lack of availability of central programme costs; and some of the assumptions made.

This section sets out findings from the evaluation's economic analysis based on the costs and outcomes of the Befriending and Mentoring projects. Due to the early nature of the outcomes assessment, outcomes are not monetised for a full cost benefit analysis. Instead, breakeven analysis – an assessment of how many outcomes would need to be realised, based on an estimate of the monetary value of those outcomes, for the project to break even in terms of its costs – is presented. The section concludes with a discussion on the value for money of the Befriending and Mentoring projects so far.

Programme costs

The evaluation team examined the financial data provided for each local authority delivering Befriending and Mentoring projects (N=21). The data collected included anticipated spend and actual expenditure. It also included total funding and projected expenditure for future quarters. As noted in Analysis of local authority spend data, the central costs to DfE of administering the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme were not included in the economic evaluation.

There was little missing financial quarter cost data in local authorities' reporting returns, with over 90% complete across all quarters except Q1, where no data on anticipated spend was collected. The missing data for actual spend across quarters comes from 3 local authorities. There is still some caution required in interpretation as anticipated and actual spend across Q2, Q3, and Q4 are likely to be underreported. Total allocated funds are reported by DfE for the full year (2025/26) rather than by local authorities, and so will be accurate.

Figure 9: Cost data completeness (Befriending and Mentoring)

Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2025/26)

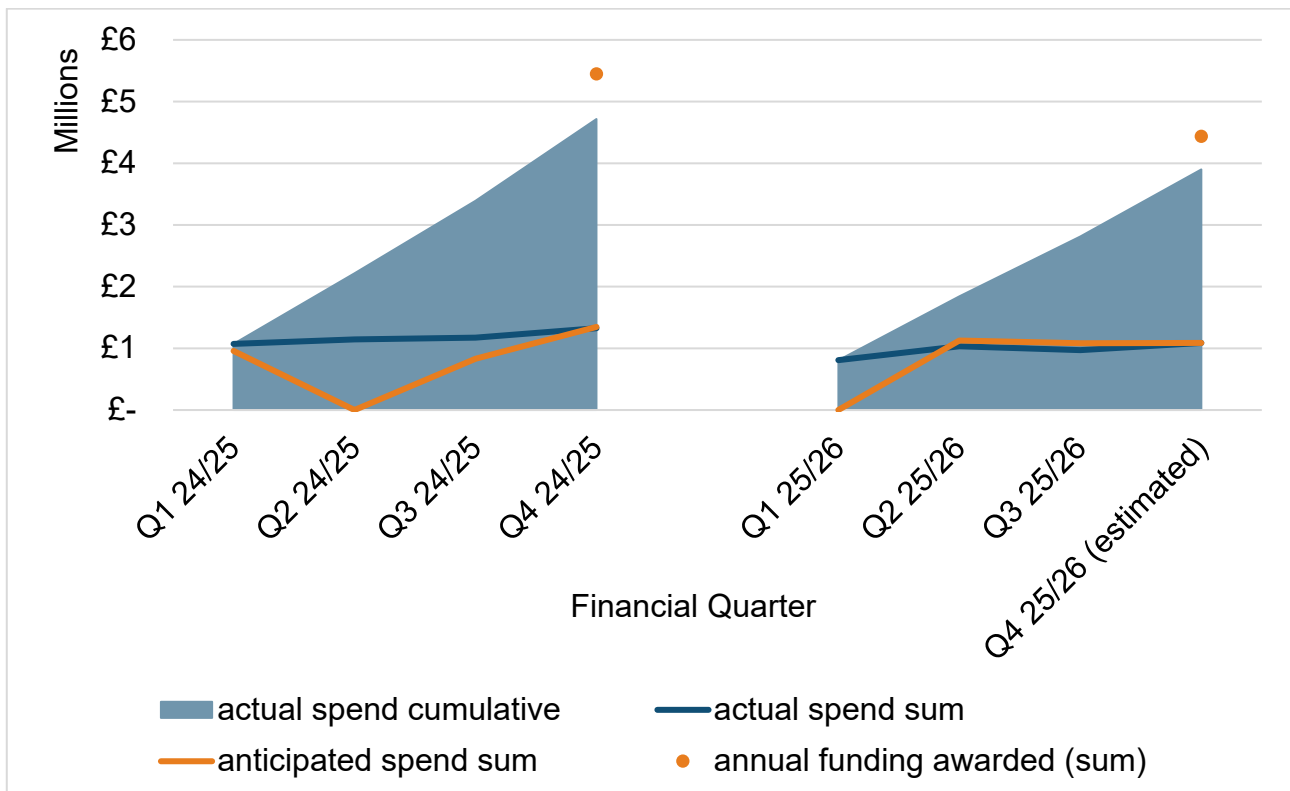
Table 20 summarises across quarters and over the financial year, the sum and average actual spend. From an allocated £4,435,637, 63% (£2,812,309) was reported spent in the first 3 financial quarters. The anticipated spend for Q4 takes this total to an estimated £3,900,497 (88% of the funds allocated) and an average of £248,895 per local authority for the 2025/26 financial year. This leaves an estimated £535,140 of underspend.

The incompleteness of data will account partially for this underspend. However, as the average estimated total spend per local authority for the entire financial year was £248,895, it is unlikely that the entire underspend is exclusively due to missing data. For Q2 and Q3, where we had both actual and anticipated spend data, the total actual spend was higher than the total anticipated spend, meaning the underspend may be less than the estimated amount once Q4 data is finalised.

Table 20: Summary of actual spend, per quarter and overall (BM 2025/26)

	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Total spent	Q4 25/26 (estimated)	Total with estimate
Number of local authorities with data	21	19	19	21	21	21
Spend (sum)	£808,589	£1,034,083	£969,637	£2,812,309	£1,088,187	£3,900,497
Average spend per LA ⁴⁰	£38,504	£54,425	£51,034	£197,077	£57,273	£248,895

Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2025/26)

Figure 10: Actual and anticipated spend compared to total funding allocated (Befriending and Mentoring, 2024/25 and 2025/26)

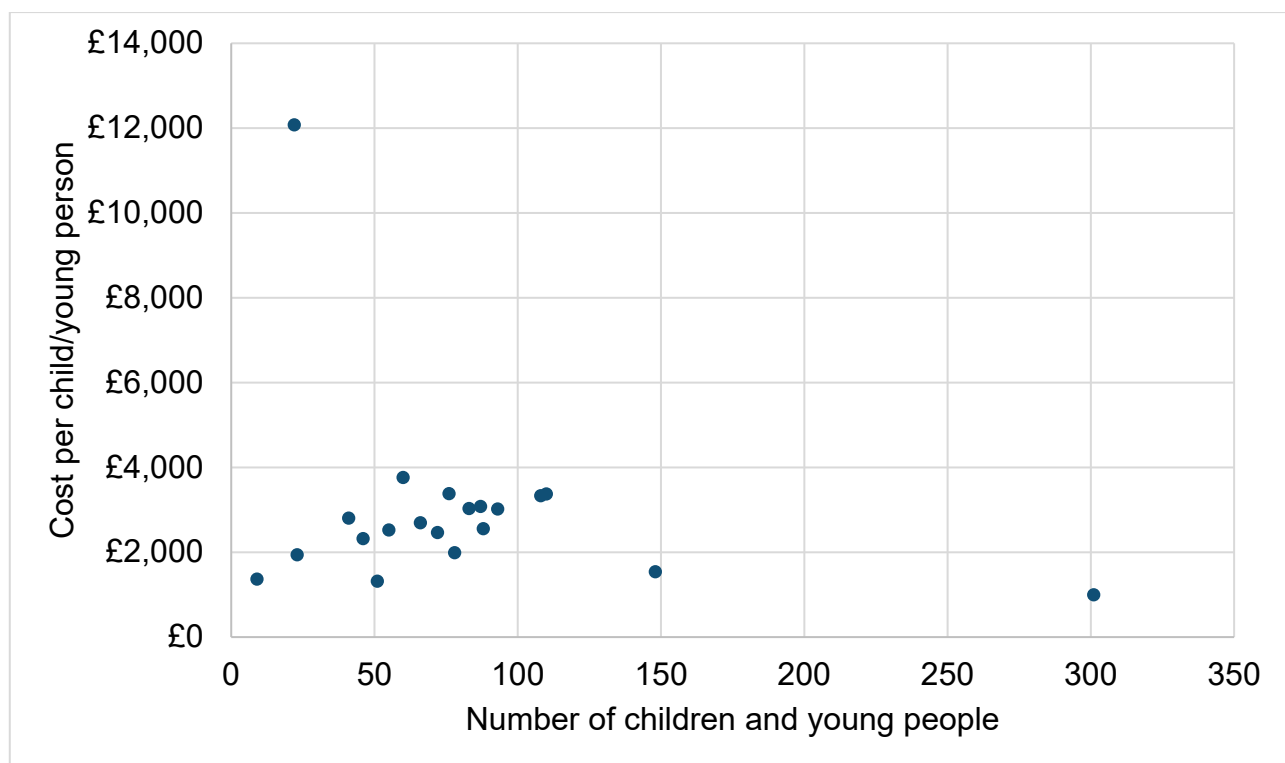
Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2024/25, 2025/26)

⁴⁰ Note that this is average of spend per local authority where reported, meaning missing data is not included. This reflects the change in N for each quarter.

In the Year 1 early findings report, as Q4 for 2024-25 had not been finalised, we estimated an underspend. Based on updated figures, the final spend for Befriending and Mentoring projects in 2024-25 was £4,717,249, with an average of £63,157 per local authority, meaning an underspend of £729,533 overall.

Thus, compared to the previous financial year, the annual funding amount and total spent for the financial year of 2025/26 both decreased, and so has the underspend. There were fewer participating local authorities in 2025-26 (N=21) than last year (N=23), which partly accounts for this absolute decrease. In the Year 1 early findings report, some projects reported delayed starts due to short timeframes following confirmation of funding. Some projects reported Q1 spend being affected by the set-up process again in 2025/26 due to delayed funding decisions from DfE.

Figure 11: Number of children and young people and the cost per child or young person (Befriending and Mentoring, Q1-Q3 2025/26)



Source: DfE Quarterly Financial data (2025/26); 2025/26 MI data

Figure 11 shows the cost per child or young person, calculated using the sum of total spent (using only Q1 to Q3 data) and this year's MI data on the number of children and young people reached per local authority. There was one local authority with children and young people returns data missing, which is excluded here. The average cost per supported child or young person was £2,978, with a total of 1,617 children and young people reached overall, giving an average of 81 children and young people per local authority. The spread was largely similar, with no clear trendlines, and most local authorities remaining around the average. However, there are 2 outliers. The first, on the

top left (22 children and young people supported, and a cost per child and young person of £12,075), had similar costs to other local authorities that reached a larger number of children and young people. The second, on the right (301 children and young people supported, and a cost per child and young person of £995), had a very high number of children and young people reached and total costs just above average.

Breakeven analysis

This section presents breakeven analysis – an assessment of how many outcomes would need to be realised, based on an estimate of the monetary value of those outcomes, for the project to break even in terms of its costs. The analysis was informed by the early outcomes assessment, MI and Children and Young People Survey, with some added information from qualitative research.

We would advise caution when interpreting this analysis due to the limitations of the early outcomes assessment (see Limitations of the evaluation).

Enhanced relationships

MI analysis estimated that children and young people gain, on average, 1.3 connections after engaging with a Befriending and Mentoring project. This was a statistically significant increase.

Connections can form enhanced relationships. There is no widely recognised unit cost or valuation of a “connection”. Different connections may mean different things to different people, and so may vary in their valuations.

In this analysis, the evaluation team considered 2 valuations of the benefit from connections – £83 and £975. These represent what might be considered the lower and higher estimates for the value of relationships. Further information on these valuations is given in Annex – Economic evaluation.

Both unit costs provide benefits to society rather than necessarily being ‘cashable’ (available to spend by government, local authorities or individuals) or providing reduced taxpayer spend (fiscal benefits), or to individuals or the economy as a whole (economic benefits).

Table 21 shows these values after adjusting for inflation (as real prices) and an estimation of deadweight (what would have happened anyway). This meant that the values or benefits from enhanced relationships were estimated to be £61 and £1,021 based on lower and higher estimations respectively.

Table 21: Value of connections

Value of connection	Value of connection (real prices, Feb 2026)	Value of impact adjusted for deadweight (-26.3%)
£83	£83	£61
£975	£1,385	£1,021

Sources: Connection values: Lifelong Links Cost Benefit Analysis template; Colombo, E. and Stanca, L. (2013); Inflation calculator: bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator;

Deadweight: UK Government (2021)

Children and young people's wellbeing

There were no statistically significant differences in wellbeing scores between baseline and endline for Befriending and Mentoring participants, though sample sizes were small which may be masking genuine changes in wellbeing. There was also a positive difference in children and young people's positivity about the future, which was borderline statistically significant, demonstrating signs of promise.

The qualitative fieldwork in the Year 1 early findings report identified evidence to suggest that some children and young people who participated in Befriending and Mentoring projects experienced increased wellbeing as a result of participation; for example, feeling more positive about things, accessing relevant support for their mental health, and increased confidence.

If actual differences in wellbeing were observed, then returns could be substantial. To assess wellbeing, care-experienced children and young people were asked the same questions that were used to measure subjective well-being by the Office for National Statistics (2020)⁴¹.

Life satisfaction can be valued using a Wellbeing Adjusted Life Year (WELLBY), with a 1-point improvement in wellbeing providing an economic benefit of between £2,500 and £16,000 per person per year (see Annex – Economic evaluation).

Table 22 outlines these wellbeing values, adjusted for inflation and deadweight. Wellbeing benefits range from £2,312 to £15,307 depending on the WELLBY value used.

⁴¹ Office for National Statistics (2020) Young People's Well-being Measures Published: 02 October 2020 ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/youngpeopleswellbeingmeasures
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/youngpeopleswellbeingmeasures>

Alternative values are provided, estimating an indicative 10% value for improvement in wellbeing, and after adjusting for deadweight. These should be seen as heavily discounted values representing a 90% reduction on the value of wellbeing, to account for uncertainty and provide very conservative estimates.

Table 22: Value of wellbeing

WELLBY value (original, 1 scale improvement in life satisfaction)	WELLBY value (real prices, Feb 2026)	Value of impact of BM adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)	Indicative 0.1 scale improvement in life satisfaction	Value of impact of BM adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)
£2,500	£3,137	£2,312	£314	£231
£10,000	£12,981	£9,567	£1,298	£957
£13,000	£16,876	£12,438	£1,688	£1,244
£16,000	£20,770	£15,307	£2,077	£1,531

Sources: WELLBY values: MacLennan, S. and Stead, I. (2021), Frijters, P. and Krekel, C. (2021);

Inflation calculator: bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator;

Impact findings: Coram analysis of adapted and historical Bright Spots surveys;

Deadweight: UK Government (2021)

Feelings of loneliness

There is tentative evidence to suggest that children and young people felt less lonely after taking part in the Befriending and Mentoring programme. Just 1% of participants felt lonely after taking part in the Befriending and Mentoring programme compared with 17% at baseline – so a reduction of 16 percentage points. This question was asked of all children and young people aged 11 and over, including care leavers. The statistically significant difference was maintained in a sensitivity test with 11 to 17-year-olds.

As an indicative analysis, using an uprated unit cost (£8,275) from the Loneliness Monetisation Report representing the alleviation of “mild” loneliness,⁴² Table 23 illustrates an indicative 16% value for improvement in loneliness (£1,324 – or £8,275 x 16%). Further deadweight applied would give a value of £976 for an estimation of a reduction in loneliness.

⁴² Peytrignet S, Garforth-Bles S, Keohane K, 2020. Loneliness Monetisation Report. DCMS. The unit cost represents the difference between mild loneliness and no loneliness.

Table 23: Value of loneliness

Lack of to mild loneliness value	Loneliness value (real prices, Feb 2026)	Value of impact of BM adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)	16% improvement in loneliness	Value of impact of BM adjusted for deadweight (- 26.3%)
£6,429	£8,275	£6,099	£1,324	£976

Sources: Loneliness value: Peytrignet S, Garforth-Bles S, Keohane K, 2020. Loneliness Monetisation Report. DCMS; Inflation calculator: bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator;

Impact findings: Coram analysis of adapted and historical Bright Spots surveys;

Deadweight: UK Government (2021)

Value for money assessment

The average cost per child or young person supported by Befriending and Mentoring projects was £2,978. The value from enhanced relationships – between £61 and £1,021 – is not enough for the project to be considered value for money alone, compared to the cost per child or young person of £2,978.

Alleviating mild loneliness amongst 16% of the cohort could add a further £976 after adjusting for deadweight. Combining with the lower and upper values of enhanced relationships, this gives returns of £1,037 and £1,997 – still below breakeven.

However, if changes in wellbeing were to be observed, the project could provide value for money. For example, a 0.1 scale improvement in life satisfaction would provide between £231 and £1,531 of benefit after an adjustment for deadweight is made, depending on the value of a WELLBY used. A full 1.0 scale benefit would benefit to the extent of £2,312 and £15,307, depending on the WELLBY value and after adjusting for deadweight.

Scenarios using the different values are given in Annex – Economic evaluation. Out of 64 scenarios, 52 of them would exceed the breakeven cost per child or young person of £2,978 and, on a basic level, provide value for money.

Most of the benefits related to wellbeing benefits, thus, are not cashable (available to spend by government, local authorities, individuals or society).

As noted above, caution should be applied when interpreting these findings due to the early nature of this assessment, the varying quality of data across local authorities, the lack of central programme costs, and some of the assumptions made.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the economic evaluation of the Befriending and Mentoring projects does not cover all benefits. The economic evaluation did not consider

outcomes beyond those articulated in the ToCs (see Annex - Theories of Change), which were highlighted in the Year 1 early findings report.

To conclude this section, assessing the programme more generally across a '4Es' framework of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity:⁴³

- the project is not cost effective at present, based on the benefits from enhanced relationships and reduced loneliness
- the projects may be cost effective if the benefits from wellbeing are realised
- some perceived cost-efficiencies were also identified in the Year 1 early findings report through qualitative research, such as building on existing systems and structures or recruiting staff with relevant experience
- some underspending is likely to result from the early nature of the programme and this assessment, rather than necessarily economy and efficiency improvements
- equity considerations are considered elsewhere in this report, in findings from the process evaluation and through qualitative research

Based on data available from Year 1 and Year 2 of the evaluation, there is evidence to suggest that the Befriending and Mentoring projects were well delivered, despite challenges encountered, and that large numbers of children and young people received support to create safe, stable and loving relationships. The next chapter provides concluding remarks across the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme, with specific recommendations for Befriending and Mentoring projects.

⁴³ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20240802044921/https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/general-principles/value-for-money/assessing-value-for-money.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on evidence from across Years 1 and 2, the evaluation finds that Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects were generally well delivered, relationally strong, and valued by children and young people. Evidence of measurable outcomes and value for money remains early and subject to important limitations, but the evaluation has found evidence of promising change for some participating children and young people.

Since 2023, DfE has provided funding to 50 projects across 45 local authorities (in Year 1) and 46 projects across 44 local authorities (in Year 2) in England to deliver the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme. During this time, the programme has reached and engaged a large number of care-experienced children and young people:

- 1,202 children and young people were referred to Family Finding projects in Year 1, and 693 were referred in Year 2 - 26% completed the projects by the end of December 2025
- 987 children and young people were referred to Befriending and Mentoring projects in Year 1, and 604 were referred in Year 2 – 10% completed the projects by the end of December 2025

More children and young people are likely to have completed their projects by the end of the 25/26 financial year (end of March 2026). This highlights a clear interest in and need for the programme in supporting care-experienced children and young people to find and (re)connect with important people in their lives and to create safe, stable, and loving relationships.

The evaluation shows that Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects supported participating children and young people to increase their number of (re)connections, on average, by 2.2 and 1.3 respectively – these were statistically significant increases. There was also tentative evidence to suggest that children and young people felt less lonely after taking part in the Befriending and Mentoring programme. While the Children and Young People Survey found limited quantitative evidence of intended outcomes being achieved, this may have been due to limitations associated with the small sample sizes. The qualitative evidence gathered through the survey's free text comments, coupled with the qualitative interview data (for Befriending and Mentoring only), highlighted a range of positive benefits, for example, supporting confidence, emotional wellbeing and stability for some children and young people involved in the programme. These findings are in line with the original Theory of Change.

Analysis of cost data for Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects indicated that across the programme there was a likely underspend in the financial year 2025/2026. At this early stage, the projects are not cost effective based on monetised benefits from

enhanced relationships or reduced loneliness alone; however, the analysis indicates that value for money could be achieved if wellbeing benefits are realised.

Whilst projects largely went on to engage the target cohorts they intended to reach, this was not always possible with some projects reporting difficulties reaching and engaging some sub-cohorts of children and young people. This highlights the importance of mechanisms to hear children and young people's views at a local level (and further research) to understand how projects are being delivered and, consequently, may need adapting in response to feedback. Barriers to children and young people's participation may also require additional inputs to support their engagement in the programme. For example, and more broadly, there is a need for care-experienced children and young people to be supported to sustain engagement with projects such as these, as well as with wider support services and opportunities (for example, through practical and digital support).

There was consensus among key project stakeholders acknowledging that the dedicated funding DfE provided was a key enabler to providing Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring support to children and young people. Despite this, the timing and administration of the funding disrupted project set up initially (in Year 1), continuity of projects' delivery between Year 1 and 2 and, most importantly, interrupted the support provided to some children and young people. It also affected projects' staffing and the ability of some projects to mobilise quickly at the start of Year 2. While the reasons for the funding decision delays were outside of DfE's control, this nevertheless had a negative effect on projects' delivery. The evaluation shows that over time, Befriending and Mentoring projects had refined practices and were more embedded. This suggests that longer-term funded projects could reach and engage a greater number of children and young people and/or enhance the impact of the programme on children and young people's outcomes across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects. Relationships between children and young people and their (re)connections and/or mentors can take time to be identified, developed and become established before outcomes can be realised.

A key strength of project delivery was the ability for projects to be flexible to meet the needs of children and young people based on their current circumstances - this included pausing and restarting support as children and young people required. The young person focussed approach and flexibility deployed by projects is of utmost importance given the range of barriers care-experienced children and young people face in taking up new or continuing to receive support. Projects with a more fluid approach to Befriending and Mentoring (for example, by not specifying the number of hours/sessions or duration of support) appeared to better align with the realities of children and young people's lives. In practice, projects had to be flexible to the different needs and circumstances of mentees to sustain engagement.

The importance of projects working with local authority teams and wider services helped projects to identify and support children and young people. As projects bedded in, wider teams became better informed and aware of the projects which supported referrals. The longer duration of the programme funding appeared to enhance joint working between projects, children's social care and leaving care services between Year 1 and Year 2. That said, some projects continued to face challenges working with these services throughout.

The evaluation provides clear learning on how relational, flexible and young-person-led approaches can support engagement among care-experienced children and young people. However, the findings highlight the need for longer-term, stable funding and strong integration with local authority services.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the programme was generally implemented as intended, though evidence of measurable outcomes remains limited at this stage and should be interpreted with caution. These limitations largely reflect the challenges in identifying the impact of programmes of this nature, leading to small survey samples, the inability to conduct experimental/quasi-experimental methods to assess impact, and challenges in capturing children and young people outcomes through MI templates. The findings, therefore, should be interpreted within this context, rather than indicating a lack of meaningful benefit, particularly where positive outcomes have been found, and impacts are expected to emerge over longer timeframes.

Family Finding

As noted above, the evaluation found that there was a statistically significant increase in the number of connections for children and young people who participated in the Family Finding projects, and that the number of connections increased over time. This aligns with the intended model of Family Finding projects where children and young people identified potential (re)connections, these people were contacted/found and re-introduced to children and young people over time.

Although Family Finding projects indicated that children and young people were encouraged to maintain contact with their (re)connections after the project support ended, in practice, there was limited practical support available to children and young people to ensure this happened in the longer term. Improved clarity of roles about who offers this support and how this is monitored via care planning could help provide additional oversight. Furthermore, the Year 1 early findings report identified the need for practical follow-on support to help children and young people maintain connections once established, such as with travel costs or access to suitable digital devices to support video calling.

Befriending and Mentoring

This evaluation has continued to contribute to the emerging evidence base about the implementation and benefits of Befriending and Mentoring projects for care-experienced children and young people.

The evaluation found that for some cohorts of children and young people, careful consideration around the timing of mentoring support may need further thought to ensure children and young people are not overwhelmed by a range of support offers at one time. For example, for some unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, improved English prior to participating may have enabled them to more meaningfully engage with mentoring support specifically. Similar programmes should therefore consider the most appropriate timing of mentoring support to ensure it is of most benefit to specific target groups.

Having a strong matching process in place was key to successful relationships being established between children and young people and their mentors. The importance of having shared interests or commonalities with their mentors was particularly stressed by the children and young people who engaged with the evaluation. They valued being supported by someone they felt understood their heritage or experiences, for example.

The extent to which children and young people were involved in the matching process varied across projects, although this was rarely the primary basis for matching, with more practical considerations often at the forefront. Therefore, it is important that children and young people participating are made aware that they are able to request to change their mentor should the match not be right for them.

There were challenges identified in recruiting mentors for projects, especially males and care-experienced mentors. Different ways of promoting mentoring opportunities should therefore be considered, for example, by utilising the experiences and stories of existing mentors and mentees to help with recruitment and promotion.

The evaluation found clear evidence that children and young people saw positive benefits from participating in a Befriending and Mentoring project. Although there were limitations to the data, the Children and Young People Survey data demonstrated positive trends around children and young people feeling more positive about their future and experiencing less loneliness. With larger sample sizes, more meaningful effects in these areas may be observed.

The qualitative data highlighted the different ways mentors established positive relationships with children and young people, which then led to wider outcomes. Where it works well, mentors have an important role in children and young people's lives - as a consistent, positive adult presence. These findings were echoed across participant groups, including by project leads, mentors, and children and young people themselves.

Having a mentor made some children and young people feel valued. For some young people, knowing that the mentor was choosing to spend time with them, as a volunteer rather than a paid staff member, deepened their sense of worth.

The evaluation identified that maintaining mentoring relationships could prove particularly challenging when placement moves or breakdowns happened, despite there being a clear need for a stable and supportive relationship during these times. Further work should be done to explore the appropriateness of and how best to ensure continuity of mentoring during disruptions such as these.

There was some evidence that mentoring may be particularly well suited to support care leavers as they navigate transition periods and the challenges of independent living and adult life.

Tips for Befriending and Mentoring projects

Based on the evaluation data, the following offers some suggestions for best practice for delivering successful Befriending and Mentoring projects with care-experienced children and young people.

- Consider ways to personalise the onboarding process for children and young people, and to make mentoring more accessible. For example, by having conversations with prospective mentees about what they hope to achieve.
- It is important to establish a strong mentor matching process which focuses on both practical aspects and matching based on shared interests and commonalities where possible.
- Ensure it is clear to children and young people that they can have some influence over who their mentor is – for example, through clear engagement during the matching process, or ensuring participants are aware they can change mentors if they feel it is not a good fit.
- If using a peer mentor model (care-experienced mentors, or other young people), ensure that there are strong support mechanisms in place for both mentors and mentees.
- Ensure that project delivery is young person led as much as possible, with support offered at the intensity and for the duration most appropriate for individuals wherever possible – and not led by contractual terms with mentors/organisations. This can be particularly challenging to balance where mentors have required hours or frequencies which do not fit with the day to day lives of the mentees.
- Expectations about the duration and ending of mentoring support should be clear from the outset so that children and young people are prepared when their mentoring relationship comes to an end.
- Close working relationships with children's social care teams and wider services can help generate referrals and ensure the smooth running of projects.
- Third party organisations bring a wealth of knowledge in delivering mentoring services and working with specific cohorts of care-experienced children and young people. Opportunities should be sought to draw on their expertise, for example by inviting them to join strategic boards or other similar opportunities.

Reflections on the programme evaluation

Findings from this evaluation largely resonate with existing evaluation evidence for Lifelong Links projects, highlighting the reported benefits of projects, the need to be child led, and the importance of ensuring mechanisms are in place to ensure sustainability of outcomes.⁴⁴ Future evaluation work on Family Finding projects should continue to ensure it complements the existing evidence base and prioritises filling in identified gaps.

The evaluation findings also largely resonate with the key principles outlined in the Foundations Practice Guide for Mentoring and Befriending projects. This highlighted, for example, the importance of tailored support, giving children and young people autonomy and control, and the need for careful matching between mentors and mentees.⁴⁵ However, despite the evaluation contributing to the evidence base on Befriending and Mentoring for care-experienced children and young people, further research and evaluation is needed, for example to:

- continue to explore the different models and approaches utilised when working with care-experienced children and young people, as well as specific sub-cohorts
- better understand the experiences of specific sub-cohorts on projects and the challenges encountered by certain groups (for example, older care-experienced young people and those who are not in education, employment or training) to explain why withdrawal rates may be higher for these groups.
- generate further quantifiable evidence of the potential outcomes and impact of befriending and mentoring for care-experienced children and young people

The Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme aimed to bring together different types of projects focused on relationships for care-experienced children and young people. Although delivered as one programme, in reality, the two strands (Family Finding, and Befriending and Mentoring) were distinct and varied in both their approach as well as their intended outcomes. Befriending and Mentoring projects also varied in their delivery, focus and targeted outcomes, making it challenging to evaluate projects as a coherent programme. Future work to evaluate the impact of such projects may be best placed focusing on a subset of mentoring approaches where more consistency can be achieved.

Achieving matched pre- and post-data in this context proved challenging. In the future, evaluators need to be involved during programme design and/or before programme delivery commences to ensure robust data can be collected to help measure the impact of such programmes. A range of quasi-experimental, theory-based, and other evaluation approaches would likely be suitable if evaluators are engaged early.

⁴⁴ [Impact of Lifelong Links - Family Rights Group](#)

⁴⁵ [Mentoring and Befriending - Foundations](#)

Across both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects, the importance of hearing the voices of children and young people was clear. Their feedback informed the evaluation at key points, however due to limitations within the evaluation resource, findings from programme level data collection were not able to be fed back at a local project level. This may have impacted response rates.

Recommendations

Based on evidence collected and presented in this report, and building on the Year 1 early findings report recommendations, this section outlines key recommendations for the programme.

For any similar programmes in future, the DfE should consider committing funding for multiple years to avoid the disruption of short-term funded projects for care-experienced children and young people. This would:

- provide delivery teams, children and young people with more time to develop trusting relationships and to better engage (more) children and young people
- help support strong multi-agency relationships to better support care-experienced children and young people
- facilitate the development of longer-term, lasting relationships between children and young people and their (re)connections or mentors to avoid the potential disruption and negative impact of relationships breaking down for children and young people
- enable the expected longer-term outcomes of the projects to be evaluated to inform future local and national spending decisions

In addition, the DfE should consider not requiring programmes to be delivered to the end of financial years; this does not fit well for children and young people, particularly those who are in education or training and may be part way through a school or academic year when the projects may cease.

When evaluating similar programmes in future, the DfE should consider ensuring:

- there is sufficient lead in time for evaluators to establish data collection tools prior to or early in the delivery period to allow for the collection of genuine baseline data
- appropriate focus is given to gathering qualitative insights from children and young people themselves, recognising that outcomes may be varied and highly personal and therefore not necessarily best captured using standardised outcome measures

Annexes

Theories of Change

Figure A1: Family Finding Theory of Change diagram (accessible version)

Situation	Over their life course, care leavers experience inequalities in health, education and employment. Loving relationships are the foundation every child needs to thrive; studies have shown that safe, stable and nurturing relationships can serve as a buffer to adversity, build resilience that supports children to develop the skills to cope with future adversity, and positively impact future wellbeing. Yet many children and young people leave care without stable relationships or people in their lives to provide emotional support, and report feeling lonely.	Aims	The Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring programme seeks to help care-experienced children and young people to identify and connect with the important people in their lives, improve their sense of identity and community, and create and sustain consistent, stable, loving relationships. The overall aim of the programme is to improve care-experienced children and young people's longer-term outcomes.
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Inputs and activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Inputs DfE funding administered through ringfenced grants. Where relevant, matched-funding or wider grant funding.	Staff and volunteer vacancies are filled. Training sessions delivered to staff, including bespoke training for subgroups with specific needs (for	Short term Children and young people: report improved wellbeing report an increased feeling of being listened to report having someone they can talk to	By 2027, every child in care and care leaver will feel that they have strong, loving relationships in place.

Inputs and activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
DfE Set project scope, monitors service and facilitates cross-local authority learning. Governance by Local Authority Heads of Service/Service Directors. Existing provision provides foundational infrastructure, knowledge, resources and processes in local authorities expanding their existing provision. Local authority ethos provides cultural foundations for project delivery (such as relational practice). Existing staff to coordinate, manage and support operations. Access to experienced self-employed Lifelong Links practitioners. Third party partners (where applicable) to deliver activities, offer expertise or support. Existing Family Finding evidence base: informs service design.	example, UASC, care-experienced parents, children living out-of-county, children in custody or otherwise involved in the CJS/at risk of exploitation, different age groups). Staff are upskilled. Service promotion activities completed such as sessions for wider services, communications and advertising. Wider services within the local authority are aware of the Family Finding service, know how to refer children and young people into it, and support children and young people receiving the Family Finding intervention.	report having a really good friend, or someone they can trust report having an adult who is interested in them report an increased satisfaction with how much, and in what ways, they see and interact with those important to them report (re)connecting with people who they have shared memories/histories report increased participation in a community report knowing someone who has things in common with them (such as a shared culture/values) report increased confidence are more aware of different opportunities which are of interest to them have increased knowledge of and access to advocates for different services and support Medium term Children and young people: report feeling less lonely and isolated report feeling more supported by and part of a larger support network and community report increased knowledge/understanding of their own story	Fiscal benefits to the state due to improvements in outcomes, which are costly to the state.

Inputs and activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
FRG resources, expertise and support: materials, training, practice model accreditation and guidance. Activities Recruit additional staff (and volunteers in a small number of Type 1 projects only) as needed for new projects, and additional practitioners for projects expanding provision to new groups of children and young people. Train staff: train new staff and provide additional training to practitioners to meet the needs of new target subgroups. Develop links with wider local authority services. Promote new/expanded Family Finding service amongst wider services, to aid referrals, enhance multi-agency support, and enable wider services to support children	Children and young people are aware of the Family Finding offer. Children and young people referred and engaged. Connections discovered and involved: wider family friends other connections Children and young people (re)connect with important people in their lives. Increased number of people in children and young peoples' support networks. Number of meetings held with new, high-quality connections. Number of 'plans' created and supported by children and young people,	are more likely to report feeling they are 'understood' by someone who has things in common with them report feeling more connected to a community report enhanced cultural ties report accessing additional relevant services Long term Children and young people: report a reduction in poor mental health report having more loving and healthy relationships report having more sustained relationships report having an improved sense of identity/ies and belonging report improved sense of voice and agency Outcome for families and friends Increased engagement in child's life (short-medium outcome) Increased involvement in meetings about the child (short-medium outcome) Outcomes for staff Staff and volunteers report:	

Inputs and activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
and young people whilst receiving the intervention. Establish or advance referral pathways so children and young people may be identified and referred to the Family Finding service. Hold initial engagement activities to onboard referred children and young people. Establish understanding of needs of children and young people referred to the Family Finding service. Support children and young people to consider and identify potential connections who could be engaged in their network. Search for and engage identified connections.	friends/ families and wider agencies.	having gained new skills or knowledge⁴⁶ having a greater sense of purpose/job satisfaction⁴⁶ Outcomes for local authorities Family Finding service is embedded in wider local authority transformation/services.⁴⁶ Culture of involvement of children and young people and their family/friends network is embedded into local authority practice.⁴⁶ Practitioners support the process of engaging with wider children and young people's networks.⁴⁶ Staff report improved workplace culture and/or practices as a result of the project.⁴⁶ Wider Outcomes Children and young people report having an advocate.⁴⁷ Increased housing (care leavers) or placement stability (children in care) (reduced placement moves).⁴⁸ Increased likelihood of children in care entering kinship care or leaving care via reunification.⁴⁸	

⁴⁶ Short-Long term outcome

⁴⁷ Medium term outcome

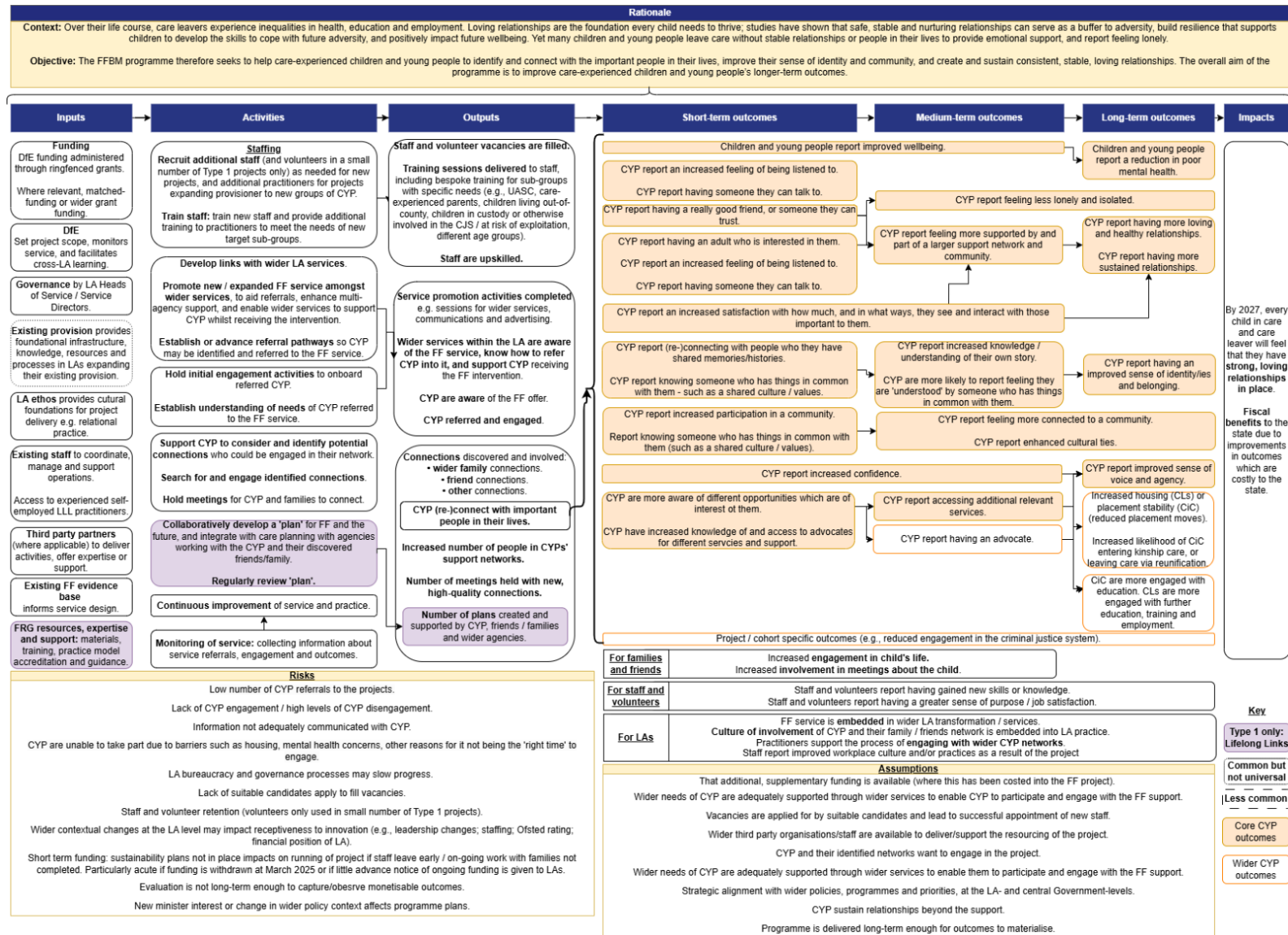
⁴⁸ Long term outcome

Inputs and activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Hold meetings for children and young people and families to connect. Collaboratively develop 'safe plan' and integrate with care planning with agencies working with the children and young people and their discovered friends/family. Regularly review 'plan'. Continuous improvement of service and practice. Monitoring of service: collecting information about service referrals, engagement and outcomes. Service accreditation: by FRG where this is desired/not already in place.		Children in care are more engaged with education. Care leavers are more engaged with further education, training and employment.⁴⁸ Project/cohort specific outcomes (such as, reduced engagement in the criminal justice system).⁴⁶	

Assumptions	That additional, supplementary funding is available (where this has been costed into the Family Finding project). Vacancies are applied for by suitable candidates and lead to successful appointment of new staff. Wider third party organisations/staff are available to deliver/support the resourcing of the project. Children and young people and their identified networks want to engage in the project. Wider needs of children and young people are adequately supported through wider services to enable them to participate and engage with the Family Finding support. Strategic alignment with wider policies, programmes and priorities, at the local authority and central Government-levels. Children and young people sustain relationships beyond the support. Programme is delivered long-term enough for outcomes to materialise.	Risks Low number of children and young people referrals to the projects. Lack of children and young people engagement/high levels of children and young people disengagement. Information not adequately communicated with children and young people. Children and young people are unable to take part due to barriers such as housing, mental health concerns, other reasons for it not being the 'right time' to engage. Local authority bureaucracy and governance processes may slow progress. Lack of suitable candidates apply to fill vacancies. Staff and volunteer retention (volunteers only used in small number of Type 1 projects). Wider contextual changes at the local authority level may impact receptiveness to innovation (such as, leadership changes; staffing; Ofsted rating; financial position of local authority). Short term funding: sustainability plans not in place impacts on running of project if staff leave early/on-going work with families not completed. Particularly acute if funding is withdrawn in March 2025 or if little advance notice of ongoing funding is given to local authorities. Evaluation is not long-term enough to capture/observe monetizable outcomes.
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			New minister interest or change in wider policy context affects programme plans.
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Figure A2: Family Finding Theory of Change diagram



Summary of data sources

Data source	Fieldwork	Local authorities participated	CYP participated (N)	Staff or volunteers participated (N)	Total number of individuals (N)
Monitoring information (MI) data on individual children and young people		Family Finding: 24 out of 25 Befriending and Mentoring: 20 out of 21	Family Finding: 1,977 Befriending and Mentoring: 1,617	N/A	3,594
Children and young people's survey	Rolling baseline and endline	Family Finding: 15 out of 25 Befriending and Mentoring: 17 out of 21	Family Finding: 137 Befriending and Mentoring: 207	N/A	344
Project Lead Survey	1 wave, during September and October 2025	Family Finding: 19 out of 25 Befriending and Mentoring: 15 out of 21	N/A	Family Finding: 19 Befriending and Mentoring: 15	34
Children and young people interviews	1 wave, during November 2025 – February 2026	Befriending and Mentoring: 5 out of 21	Befriending and Mentoring: 9	N/A	9
Young People's Workshops	2 workshops in November 2025	Befriending and Mentoring: 6 out of 21	Befriending and Mentoring: 9	N/A	9

Data source	Fieldwork	Local authorities participated	CYP participated (N)	Staff or volunteers participated (N)	Total number of individuals (N)
Project Lead focus groups	5 focus groups during November and December 2025	Befriending and Mentoring: 17 out of 21	N/A	21	21
Mentor focus groups	6 focus groups during November and December 2025	Befriending and Mentoring: 12 out of 21	N/A	17	17

Detailed methodology

Monitoring information (MI) data collection, cleaning and analysis

The evaluation comprised several key methods to provide data for the early impact, process and economic strands of the evaluation. The analysis in this report used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from different sources. Details of each of the methods used can be found below.

The purpose of collecting the MI was to gather quantitative data about children and young people involved in the projects. This supported the process and implementation evaluation strands to understand more about children and young people's reach and engagement with the projects, as well as supporting the evaluation team to explore the quantitative impact of the programme.

In collaboration with DfE and a small number of local authorities, in Year 1, the evaluation team developed 2 templates to collect the MI data on a quarterly basis from each local authority.⁴⁹ There was a template each for Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring. Where local authorities were delivering both Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects, local authorities completed both templates for the respective projects. The MI templates collected the following data to support the process evaluation:

- demographic information about children and young people involved in the project/s: month and year of birth; age; sex; ethnicity; education, employment and training status (EET); care status; number of placements in last 12 months
- data on children and young people's engagement in projects: date of referral; date support started; status and progress to date (based on date data entered); if the child/young person was referred but is not participating in the project, or withdrew, a short explanation as to why; date support ended
 - also, for Befriending and Mentoring projects: typical frequency of contact with mentor and whether they participate in group activities

In addition, the MI templates collected the following data relating to outcomes:

- based on information known by the person completing the template, data on the number of connections children and young people had at the start of the project and currently; whether the child/young person has made connections with immediate or wider family, friends, professionals (teachers, social workers, etc.) or other important people in their lives

⁴⁹ The first MI template was sent to local authorities in September 2024. Local authorities were asked to backdate the data for all children and young people who had joined the programme since it started. Subsequent MI data collection is due each quarter until March 2025.

- for Family Finding Lifelong Links projects, data on whether the child/young person has increased support networks, knowledge of family, a stronger sense of identity or has repaired relationships⁵⁰
- other information about whether the child/young person is participating in another Family Finding or Befriending and Mentoring project; whether they are receiving wider support outside of the programme and which would achieve similar outcomes; and any other (free text) comments

MI data has been collected at 6 timepoints during the evaluation period; 'wave one' collected data from the start of delivery (approximately December 2023) to end September 2024 (aiming to 'backdate' children and young people's data to that point), while the next waves were launched every quarter. In total, the following MI quarterly returns were collected:

- Wave 1: Backdated data period (up to end of Sep 2024)
- Wave 2: Oct-Dec 2024
- Wave 3: Jan-Mar 2025
- Wave 4: Apr-Jun 2025
- Wave 5: Jul-Sep 2025
- Wave 6: Oct-Dec 2025

The MI data presented in this report is based on the latest wave of MI data collection (Oct-Dec 2025). The full dataset contained data for 44 projects.

MI data cleaning

The data cleaning process for each wave of the MI data followed the following steps:

- local authority-level MI datasets were merged to construct 2 separate datasets: one for Family Finding projects and one for Befriending and Mentoring projects
- data was checked for completion and quality
- data was cleaned, where needed, for example, by removing or recoding invalid inputs

⁵⁰ Staff were encouraged to draw on information already captured through the Circles tool, which is completed by children and young people. This was then entered by a professional into the MI template. Further information about this tool can be found here: [Lifelong Links Circles – Family Rights Group](#).

- responses including “prefer not to say”, “do not know”, “[local authority] do[es] not collect this information”, and “N/A” were treated as missing information, apart from cases where this was useful to report on
- new metrics were constructed (for example, dates were used to measure duration of certain processes, such as the number of days from the date of referral to the date the support started, duration of support, etc.).

MI data analysis

For this report, the quantitative analysis of the MI data focused on descriptive statistics. This means figures are reported in the form of frequencies, percentages, sums and averages. The analysis includes statistical significance testing, where possible, as well as early indications of outcomes. However, this analysis does not include a full impact evaluation of the Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring programme, as such, outcome findings cannot be wholly attributed to the programme. Light touch analysis was conducted of the free text comments in the report. This included coding all comments to identify any common themes and trends emerging.

All data cleaning and quantitative analysis in this report were conducted using Excel and R (a statistical analysis software package).

Limitations of the MI data

The MI data analysis has presented the following limitations:

- missing data from some local authorities. As mentioned above, while MI covered most projects (44 out of 46) across Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects, 2 projects were missing from this dataset. Overall, the same 2 projects did not consistently engage with the MI data collection throughout years 1 and 2, providing only some quarters of MI data. Where projects were unable to return the MI data, reasons included capacity and changes in personnel causing delays. However, as the vast majority of projects provided with MI data, this suggests that the data included in this report is broadly representative across the programme
- missing/incomplete data and small sample sizes. While in most cases the MI datasets contained sufficient sample sizes, there were instances where data were incomplete or missing, therefore reducing the sample. This was somewhat expected, especially for outcome data collected via the MI template. In some cases, outcomes were not recorded for some children and young people as they were just starting to engage with the programme (as the MI returns are snapshots during delivery, capturing data at various stages of engagement). The same was true for other metrics, which were specific to the Family Finding Lifelong Links model. Only some local authorities that were delivering Family Finding had recorded these

metrics as part of Lifelong Links.⁵¹ In other cases, the sample had to be reduced for analysis purposes, for example, to focus on a sub-sample of only those who had already engaged with the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring programme. These cases are highlighted in the respective sections, and caution is advised when smaller samples are used as they may not be representative of all local authorities or children and young people taking part

- retrospective nature of certain questions. The majority of the MI data is based on only one point in time; this is the same timepoint for all children and young people regardless of when they were referred to or began participating with a project. That said, it records the number of connections children and young people have “before” and “after” engaging with Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects. The accuracy of this data may vary, as the “before” data may not have been collected before children and young people started engaging in the project. The accuracy of this data is therefore dependent on whether the data was already recorded by each local authority and/or based on the knowledge and recollection of each coordinator filling in the data on behalf of an individual child or young person

Focus groups (Befriending and Mentoring)

Focus groups were grouped by the Befriending and Mentoring project typology developed in Year 1 of the evaluation. Whilst the limitations of the typologies should be acknowledged (they oversimplify the diversity of projects’ approaches, and some typology groupings apply to only a small number of projects), at a practical level, this sampling approach ensured discussions could be tailored to different types of projects where possible. Information about the focus groups was shared with contacts in Befriending and Mentoring local authorities, who were asked to nominate 1-2 attendees for each of the focus groups, as appropriate and with their consent. Participants were provided with an information sheet and privacy notice about the evaluation in advance. Table A1 outlines the focus group sample achieved.

Table A1: Focus group sample

Focus group stakeholder type	Number of participants	Number of projects represented
Project leads (n=5)	21	17
Mentors (n=6)	17	12

⁵¹ Based on feedback from local authorities and DfE, the Family Finding MI template included specific data fields for local authorities delivering LLL projects to align with data collected through the LLL delivery model via the Circles tool. This data was inputted by project staff and not collected directly from children and young people for this evaluation.

All focus groups were carried out in November-December 2025 and took place online via Microsoft Teams, lasting up to 90 minutes each. Focus groups were recorded to generate a transcript, and the evaluation team wrote up detailed notes into an analysis framework structured by the evaluation questions.

The evaluation team developed bespoke topic guides for the focus groups, as well as for each participant type. The topic guides were aligned to the research questions and informed by the Befriending and Mentoring typologies and programme ToC.

The topic guides were designed to explore key elements of project design and delivery, including:

- project design aspects, including activities, working with target cohorts and matching processes
- what helped and hindered project engagement
- perceptions of early outcomes (and any unintended outcomes) for young people (and other stakeholders)
- reflections on delivery and implementation

The evaluation team adopted framework analysis for the qualitative data analysis; this was structured according to the evaluation framework and key research questions.

Children and Young People Survey

We invited each child and young person who was taking part in the projects to complete a survey called the 'Children and young people's survey'. The surveys asked children and young people about what is important to them and what makes their life good.

The survey and approach used in Year 2 differed from those used in the Year 1 evaluation. In Year 1, the survey included more questions from Coram's Bright Spots survey to enable comparisons. The Year 2 survey included some questions from Coram's Bright Spots programme, but overall, the survey was more focused on the specific outcomes of the programme. The Bright Spots surveys were developed in collaboration with Professor Julie Selwyn at the University of Oxford and co-produced with care-experienced children and young people. The surveys used in the evaluation were adapted to better reflect the intended outcomes of the Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring projects.

There were 4 different surveys (covering ages 4 to 17 and care leavers), depending on the age of the child or young person. The 4 versions used were for: children aged 4 to 7 years; children aged 8 to 11 years in primary school; young people of secondary school age 11 to 17 years; and care leavers.

For Year 2, children and young people were asked to complete the survey at 2 timepoints during the course of their engagement with the projects – once towards the beginning and once towards the end. Although there was good participation with the survey overall (338 baseline and 197 endline in total), challenges administering the survey with local authorities meant that post data cleaning there was considerable change – including baseline responses being recoded to endline where the wrong survey had been administered, duplicates deleted, and baselines classed as endlines (if no subsequent endline was submitted) where the survey was administered after more than 2 weeks of support was delivered.

The evaluation team cleaned the data to remove children and young people who did not confirm that they consented to take part. There were several cases where the same ID was used for different individuals (according to demographic characteristics) – for these cases new unique IDs were created to retain the data within the analysable sample. There were several duplicates across Family Finding and Befriending and Mentoring datasets, where the survey response and ID were identical – these were removed. There was one ID with matched data, but with different demographic characteristics at baseline and endline – these were separated into 2 unique IDs. Several responses at endline were moved to baseline, due to participants having not engaged with the programme (in other words, not a true endline), and/or a later endline response existing for the same ID. Similarly, several responses at baseline were moved to endline, due to participants receiving support for longer than 2 weeks and/or an earlier baseline response existing for the same ID.

The cleaned, analysable dataset comprised unmatched (participants who responded to either baseline or endline Children and Young People Surveys) samples of 137 participants for Family Finding and 207 for Befriending and Mentoring. Matched samples (participants who responded to both baseline and endline Children and Young People Surveys) were small, with 11 participants for Family Finding and 19 for Befriending and Mentoring.

Table A2: Participant numbers in analysable dataset

Age group	FF Baseline only	FF Endline only	FF Matched	BM Baseline only	BM Endline only	BM Matched
4-7 years	2	0	0	0	12	0
8-11 years	6	0	0	0	21	1
11-17 years	28	29	4	42	97	17

Care leavers	28	44	7	32	3	1
Total	64	73	11	74	133	19

The surveys included standardised subjective well-being questions used by the Office for National Statistics. They explored life satisfaction, happiness, and whether respondents feel the things they do in life are worthwhile, by asking children and young people to rate their wellbeing on a scale from 0 ('not at all') to 10 ('completely'). For care leavers, we also included a question about anxiety. We did not use this for children in care, as the young people we developed the survey with did not like this question. Instead, we ask them how positive they feel about the future. We followed ONS categorisations.⁵² for low, medium, high, and very high scores (see Table A3), although our analysis uses the continuous scales (0-10) for inferential testing.

Table A3: Life satisfaction, worthwhileness, happiness, and positivity about the future⁵³

Response	Label
0 to 4	Low
5 to 6	Medium
7 to 8	High
9 to 10	Very high

Table A4: Anxiety

Response	Label
0 to 1	Very low
2 to 3	Low
4 to 5	Medium
6 to 10	High

We grouped responses to Children and Young People survey questions into binary categories and across age groups where possible, to boost sample sizes to enable inferential analysis. For the contact variables, we excluded responses where the parent or

⁵² GSS Harmonisation Team (2020). Personal wellbeing harmonised standard. Government Analysis Function. Available at: [Personal wellbeing harmonised standard – Government Analysis Function](#)

⁵³ As noted above the 'positivity about the future' question was our own addition instead of the 'anxiety' questions for children in care. We followed the same thresholds as 'life satisfaction', 'worthwhileness' and 'happiness' from official ONS categorisations, as similarly positive-framed questions.

sibling had passed away. We have not reported survey questions with very small response rates, including additional wellbeing questions for care leavers (for example, 'In the last few weeks how often have you felt optimistic? In the last few weeks how often have you felt proud? Etc.).

We summarised demographic characteristics and survey responses using counts and proportions. For unmatched data, we used chi-square tests to examine differences between baseline and endline responses. If response frequencies were less than or equal to 10, we used Fisher's exact tests, and if cell sizes were between 11 and 24, we used Yates' continuity correction. Independent samples t-tests were used to examine differences in continuous baseline and endline variables, such as the ONS wellbeing indicators. We depict this graphically using forest plots with bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (CIs). For matched data, we used McNemar's tests to examine baseline and endline differences. If the matched sample was less than or equal to 10, we used the McNemar's exact test, and if the sample was 11-24, we used the Yates' continuity correction. Paired samples t-tests were used to examine differences in continuous baseline and endline variables, again coupled with forest plots. Wellbeing variables were treated as headline measures and not subject to multiple test corrections. Statistical significance was defined as $p < 0.05$ for all inferential tests, consistent with common analytical practice. For the unmatched sample, we report raw p-values and compare these with a Bonferroni-adjusted p-value for the 24 tests within the unmatched sample (0.002). Where we identified statistically significant differences, we have carried out sensitivity testing with the largest consistent age group (11–17-year-olds) between baseline and endline with the unmatched sample to check whether differences in age composition between the 2 groups are playing a role in observed differences.

Despite sample sizes being small (less than 100), we have presented percentages to aid interpretation. We have not reported frequency data in Table A11 (Family Finding participants' responses to Children and Young People Survey questions) and Table A12 (Befriending and Mentoring participants' responses to Children and Young People Survey questions) for the matched sample, as these numbers were so small. Counts under 5 are suppressed. Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding.

We summarised open-text responses to qualitative survey questions, identifying emerging themes for each question. Qualitative responses were analysed for the cleaned dataset but included all baseline and endline responses for both matched and unmatched samples. Key quotes have been used throughout the report.

Children and young people qualitative fieldwork (Befriending and Mentoring)

Children and young people were recruited for the qualitative fieldwork via project leads. The evaluation team emailed details of the interviews and participatory workshops to all Befriending and Mentoring project leads to share with young people. Children and young

people were then asked to sign up to participate via an online form (completed by a carer or guardian for children in care). Children in care were offered a one-to-one interview with a member of the evaluation team at Ecorys, and care leavers could choose to participate in either an interview or the participatory online workshop led by Coram.

Children and young people were purposively sampled for the interviews to include a wide range of children and young people. Four children in care expressed interest in an interview, and all were invited to participate; however, 3 were interviewed. Thirty-one care leavers expressed interest in participating in an interview, and 6 took part. The evaluation team made several attempts to engage with care leavers for interviews during the fieldwork period. However, the majority did not respond, and a small amount said they were no longer interested in participating. Care leavers were sampled to achieve maximum diversity of gender and representation from various local authority areas. All care leavers who signed up to an online workshop were invited to attend.

For interviews with children and young people, alongside the topic guides, the evaluation team developed age-appropriate participatory tools in Year 1 of the evaluation which were used again in Year 2. These helped facilitate meaningful conversations with children and young people about their project experiences. These tools included bright and visual worksheets which were used by children and young people instead of or alongside a more structured interview. Participants were invited to write or draw on sheets and use a series of graphics and emojis provided.

The topic guides and participatory tools for children and young people were shared with the care-experienced consultants panel for feedback prior to their use in Year 1.

For the participatory online workshops, Coram Voice recruited a paid Care-experienced Consultant to co-facilitate these. The Care-experienced Consultant co-designed the discussion group schedule, attended a preparation session and led facilitation in one workshop – they were unable to attend workshop 2. The Care-experienced Consultant was paid the living wage for their time and inputs.

All young people who participated in a workshop or interview received a £20 shopping voucher in recognition of their contribution.

Economic evaluation

Some outcomes⁵⁴ did not feature in the breakeven analysis as they were considered part of, or would feed into, other outcomes – this was to avoid double-counting and to take a conservative approach to analysis and not to over-claim.⁵⁵

In the absence of alternative figures, the adjustment of 26.3% was made for deadweight in line with Green Book's supplementary guidance.⁵⁶

Relationships:

- £83 for the lower value of relationships. This unit cost is the price of 6 contact sessions in total between looked after children and their families of origin, each of 1.5 hours duration. This is presented as a proxy – for example, £83 could be considered roughly equivalent to the value of informal family time arrangements. The unit cost was identified as part of the internal audit and evaluation of Lifelong Links in Hertfordshire (2025)⁵⁷
- £975 for the higher value of relationships. This unit cost is the estimated monetary value of what individuals were willing to pay for social relations (such as time spent with friends over one year) using a revealed preferences approach (2013)⁵⁸

Though the number of connections increased over time, unit costs were applied once, and not multiplied by the number of connections. This was because there was no clear evidence that more connections made a significant difference to outcomes; instead, making at least one connection was seen as important.

Wellbeing:

Children and young people selected a point on a 0-to-10-point scale, for each of the following measures: happiness, life satisfaction, feeling things are worthwhile, and extent of feeling anxious. Following ONS conventions, those scoring 0 to 4 are reported as 'Low', those 5 to 6 'Medium' and those 7 to 10 'High'.

⁵⁴ Identity and belonging, sense of community, and Family Finding Lifelong Links (LLL) outcomes including support networks, knowledge of family, sense of identity and repaired relationships.

⁵⁵ [Social Value UK \(2025\) Principles of Social Value. Available from: socialvalueuk.org/principles-of-social-value](https://socialvalueuk.org/principles-of-social-value)

⁵⁶ UK Government (2014) Supporting Public Service Transformation: Cost Benefit Analysis Guidance for Local Partnerships. Available from: gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-public-service-transformation-cost-benefit-analysis-guidance-for-local-partnerships

⁵⁷ [Family Rights Group \(2022\) Lifelong Links: Embedding practice – Briefing paper by Rees Centre, University of Oxford © Family Rights Group 2025.](#)

⁵⁸ Colombo, E. and Stanca, L. (2013) Measuring the Monetary Value of Social Relations: A Hedonic Approach. Milan: University of Milan. Available from: dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2339923.

Wellbeing Adjusted Life Years (WELLBYs) are referred to in HM Treasury's Green Book Supplementary Guidance on Wellbeing.⁵⁹ One WELLBY has been said to equate to a 1-point change in life satisfaction on a 0 to 10 scale, per person per year. Valuations of a WELLBY vary, with £13,000 (at 2019 prices), within a range of £10,000 to £16,000 often cited.⁶⁰ However, a 2021 paper from Frijters and Krekel estimated the price of a WELLBY more conservatively at £2,500.⁶¹

Please note this analysis assumed that the wellbeing benefits from the programme will last, on average, for a year.

Table A5: Scenarios for breakeven analysis based on different unit costs for Family Finding projects

Relationships	Wellbeing	Reduction in loneliness	Total
£61	£231	£610	£902
£61	£231	£610	£902
£61	£957	£610	£1,628
£61	£957	£610	£1,628
£1,021	£231	£610	£1,862
£1,021	£231	£610	£1,862
£61	£1,244	£610	£1,915
£61	£1,244	£610	£1,915
£61	£1,531	£610	£2,202
£61	£1,531	£610	£2,202
£1,021	£957	£610	£2,588
£1,021	£957	£610	£2,588
£1,021	£1,244	£610	£2,875
£1,021	£1,244	£610	£2,875
£61	£2,312	£610	£2,983
£61	£2,312	£610	£2,983
£1,021	£1,531	£610	£3,162
£1,021	£1,531	£610	£3,162
£1,021	£2,312	£610	£3,943

⁵⁹ UK Government (2021) Green Book supplementary guidance: wellbeing. Available from: gov.uk/government/publications/green-book-supplementary-guidance-wellbeing.

⁶⁰ MacLennan, S. and Stead, I. (2021), p.5. Wellbeing discussion paper: monetisation of life satisfaction effect sizes: A review of approaches and proposed approach. His Majesty's Treasury: Social Impacts Task Force.

⁶¹ Frijters, P. and Krekel, C. (2021) A Handbook for Wellbeing Policy-Making. Oxford University Press.

Relationships	Wellbeing	Reduction in loneliness	Total
£1,021	£2,312	£610	£3,943
£61	£231	£6,099	£6,391
£61	£231	£6,099	£6,391
£61	£957	£6,099	£7,117
£61	£957	£6,099	£7,117
£1,021	£231	£6,099	£7,351
£1,021	£231	£6,099	£7,351
£61	£1,244	£6,099	£7,404
£61	£1,244	£6,099	£7,404
£61	£1,531	£6,099	£7,691
£61	£1,531	£6,099	£7,691
£1,021	£957	£6,099	£8,077
£1,021	£957	£6,099	£8,077
£1,021	£1,244	£6,099	£8,364
£1,021	£1,244	£6,099	£8,364
£61	£2,312	£6,099	£8,472
£61	£2,312	£6,099	£8,472
£1,021	£1,531	£6,099	£8,651
£1,021	£1,531	£6,099	£8,651
£1,021	£2,312	£6,099	£9,432
£1,021	£2,312	£6,099	£9,432
£61	£9,567	£610	£10,238
£61	£9,567	£610	£10,238
£1,021	£9,567	£610	£11,198
£1,021	£9,567	£610	£11,198
£61	£12,438	£610	£13,109
£61	£12,438	£610	£13,109
£1,021	£12,438	£610	£14,069
£1,021	£12,438	£610	£14,069
£61	£9,567	£6,099	£15,727
£61	£9,567	£6,099	£15,727
£61	£15,307	£610	£15,978

Relationships	Wellbeing	Reduction in loneliness	Total
£61	£15,307	£610	£15,978
£1,021	£9,567	£6,099	£16,687
£1,021	£9,567	£6,099	£16,687
£1,021	£15,307	£610	£16,938
£1,021	£15,307	£610	£16,938
£61	£12,438	£6,099	£18,598
£61	£12,438	£6,099	£18,598
£1,021	£12,438	£6,099	£19,558
£1,021	£12,438	£6,099	£19,558
£61	£15,307	£6,099	£21,467
£61	£15,307	£6,099	£21,467
£1,021	£15,307	£6,099	£22,427
£1,021	£15,307	£6,099	£22,427

Source: Ecorys analysis

Table A6: Scenarios for breakeven analysis based on different unit costs for Befriending and Mentoring projects

Relationships	Wellbeing	Reduction in loneliness	Total
£61	£231	£976	£1,268
£61	£231	£976	£1,268
£61	£957	£976	£1,994
£61	£957	£976	£1,994
£1,021	£231	£976	£2,228
£1,021	£231	£976	£2,228
£61	£1,244	£976	£2,281
£61	£1,244	£976	£2,281
£61	£1,531	£976	£2,568
£61	£1,531	£976	£2,568
£1,021	£957	£976	£2,954
£1,021	£957	£976	£2,954
£1,021	£1,244	£976	£3,241
£1,021	£1,244	£976	£3,241

Relationships	Wellbeing	Reduction in loneliness	Total
£61	£2,312	£976	£3,349
£61	£2,312	£976	£3,349
£1,021	£1,531	£976	£3,528
£1,021	£1,531	£976	£3,528
£1,021	£2,312	£976	£4,309
£1,021	£2,312	£976	£4,309
£61	£231	£6,099	£6,391
£61	£231	£6,099	£6,391
£61	£957	£6,099	£7,117
£61	£957	£6,099	£7,117
£1,021	£231	£6,099	£7,351
£1,021	£231	£6,099	£7,351
£61	£1,244	£6,099	£7,404
£61	£1,244	£6,099	£7,404
£61	£1,531	£6,099	£7,691
£61	£1,531	£6,099	£7,691
£1,021	£957	£6,099	£8,077
£1,021	£957	£6,099	£8,077
£1,021	£1,244	£6,099	£8,364
£1,021	£1,244	£6,099	£8,364
£61	£2,312	£6,099	£8,472
£61	£2,312	£6,099	£8,472
£1,021	£1,531	£6,099	£8,651
£1,021	£1,531	£6,099	£8,651
£1,021	£2,312	£6,099	£9,432
£1,021	£2,312	£6,099	£9,432
£61	£9,567	£976	£10,604
£61	£9,567	£976	£10,604
£1,021	£9,567	£976	£11,564
£1,021	£9,567	£976	£11,564
£61	£12,438	£976	£13,475
£61	£12,438	£976	£13,475

Relationships	Wellbeing	Reduction in loneliness	Total
£1,021	£12,438	£976	£14,435
£1,021	£12,438	£976	£14,435
£61	£9,567	£6,099	£15,727
£61	£9,567	£6,099	£15,727
£61	£15,307	£976	£16,344
£61	£15,307	£976	£16,344
£1,021	£9,567	£6,099	£16,687
£1,021	£9,567	£6,099	£16,687
£1,021	£15,307	£976	£17,304
£1,021	£15,307	£976	£17,304
£61	£12,438	£6,099	£18,598
£61	£12,438	£6,099	£18,598
£1,021	£12,438	£6,099	£19,558
£1,021	£12,438	£6,099	£19,558
£61	£15,307	£6,099	£21,467
£61	£15,307	£6,099	£21,467
£1,021	£15,307	£6,099	£22,427
£1,021	£15,307	£6,099	£22,427

Source: Ecorys analysis

Additional data tables

Project Lead Survey: additional data tables

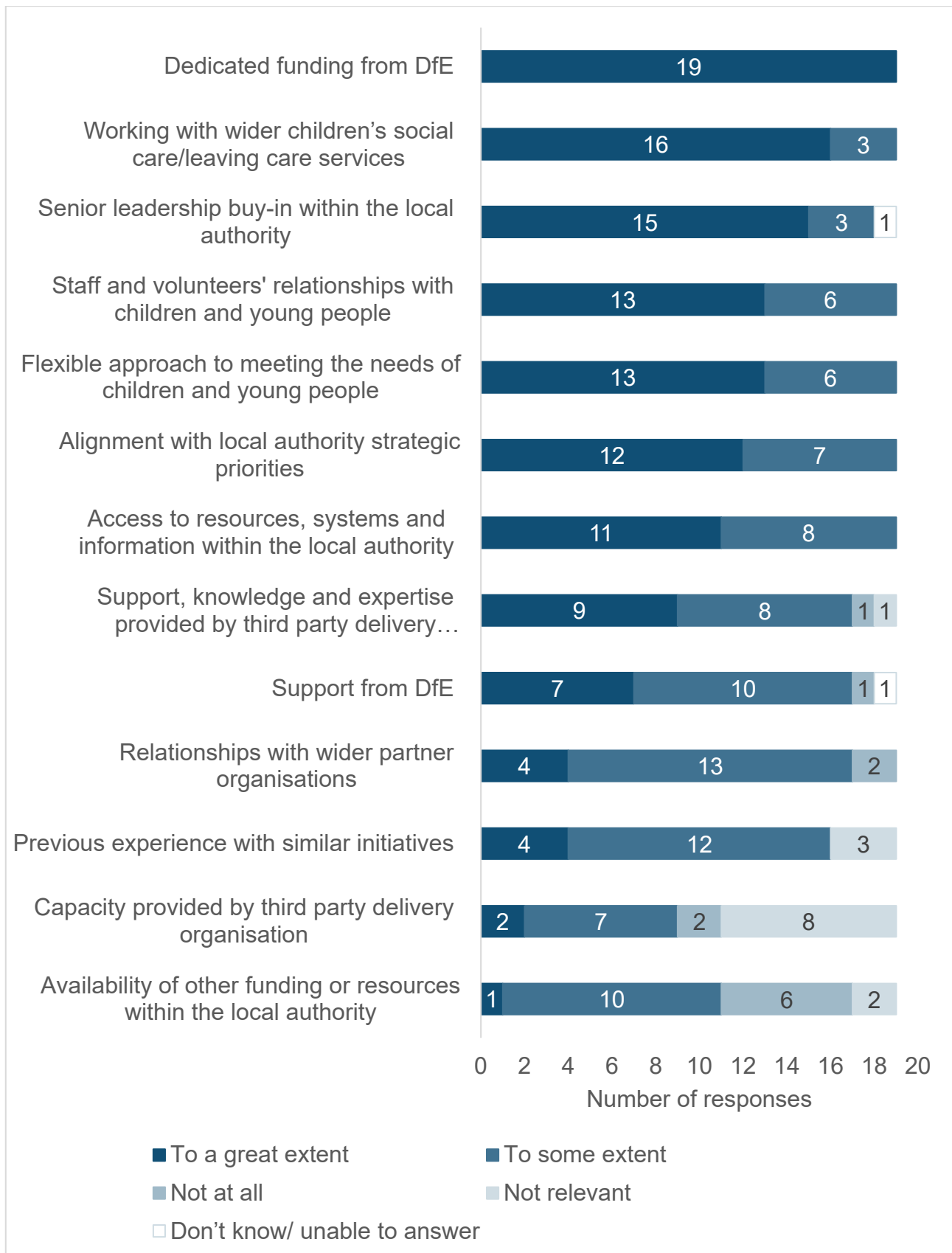
Table A7: Cohorts targeted Family Finding projects aimed to support

Target cohort	Projects targeting children in care (n=6)	Projects engaging children in care (n=6)	Projects targeting care leavers (n=6)	Projects engaging care leavers (n=6)
UASC	1	0	2	2
Those not in education, training or employment (NEET)	1	1	1	1

Those with a mental health issue	1	1	2	2
Those living in a children's home or supported accommodation	4	4	2	2
Those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)	2	2	1	1
Those who have experienced multiple placement moves	5	5	4	4
Young parents	2	1	3	3
Those involved with the criminal justice system, in custody or working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS)	2	2	2	2
Those at-risk of exploitation or with repeat missing episodes	3	3	2	1
Those living outside of the county/borough which cares for them	4	4	3	2
Those with a permanency care plan	4	4	2	0

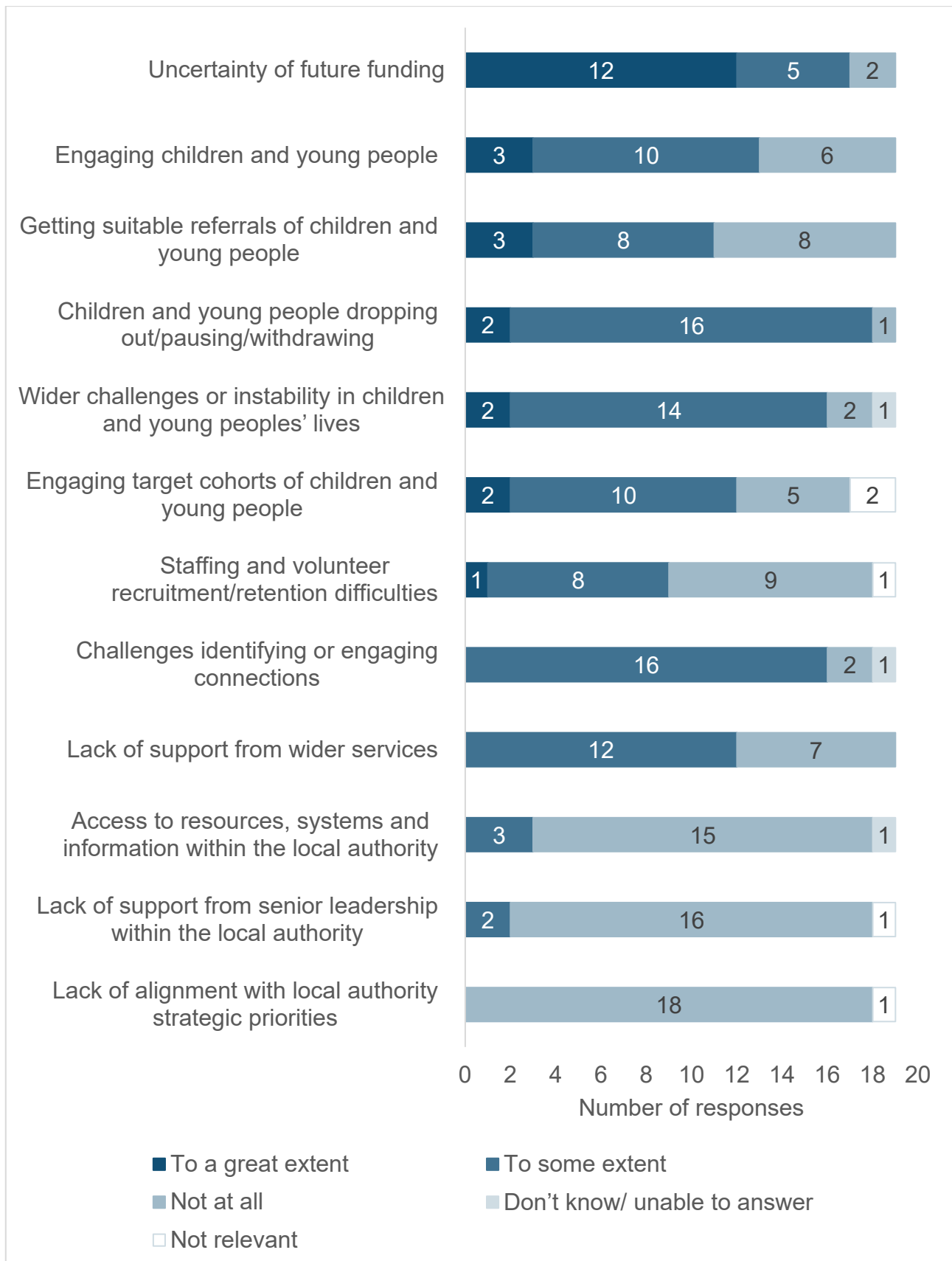
Source: Project Lead Survey (n=6)

Figure A3: Project lead views on the enablers to delivering their Family Finding project



Source: Project Lead Survey (n=19)

Figure A4: Project lead views on the barriers to delivering their Family Finding project



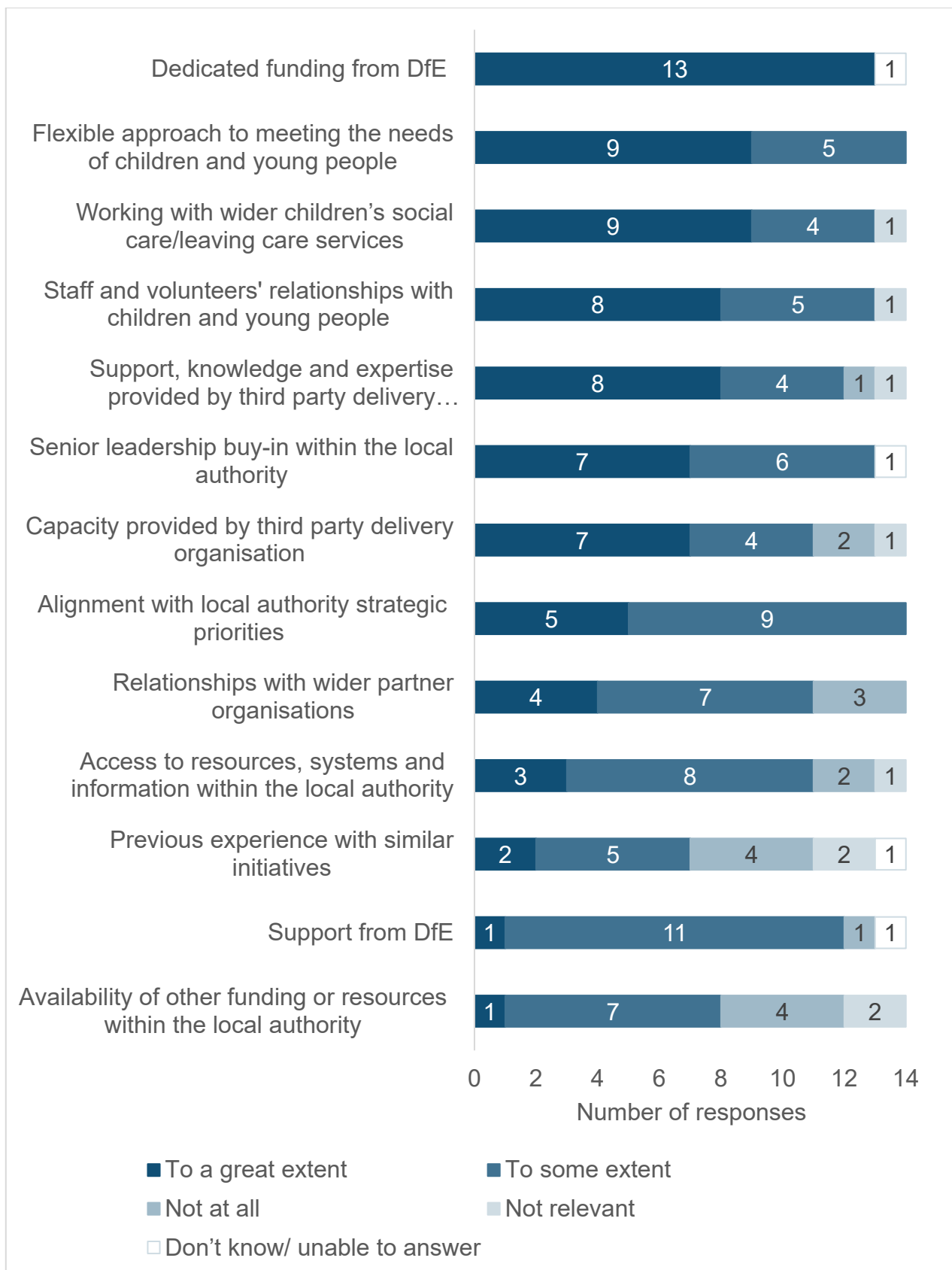
Source: Project Lead Survey (n=19)

Table A8: Cohorts targeted Befriending and Mentoring projects aimed to support

Target cohort	Projects targeting children in care (n=7)	Projects engaging children in care (n=7)	Projects targeting care leavers (n=12)	Projects engaging care leavers (n=11)
UASC	4	4	8	8
NEET	4	2	8	7
Those with a mental health issue	2	1	5	4
Those living in a children's home or supported accommodation	2	1	4	4
SEND	2	1	4	3
Those who have experienced multiple placement moves	2	2	3	2
Young parents	1	1	4	2
Those involved with the criminal justice system, in custody or working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS)	0	0	3	3
Those at-risk of exploitation or with repeat missing episodes	1	0	3	1
Those living outside of the county/borough which cares for them	0	0	2	2

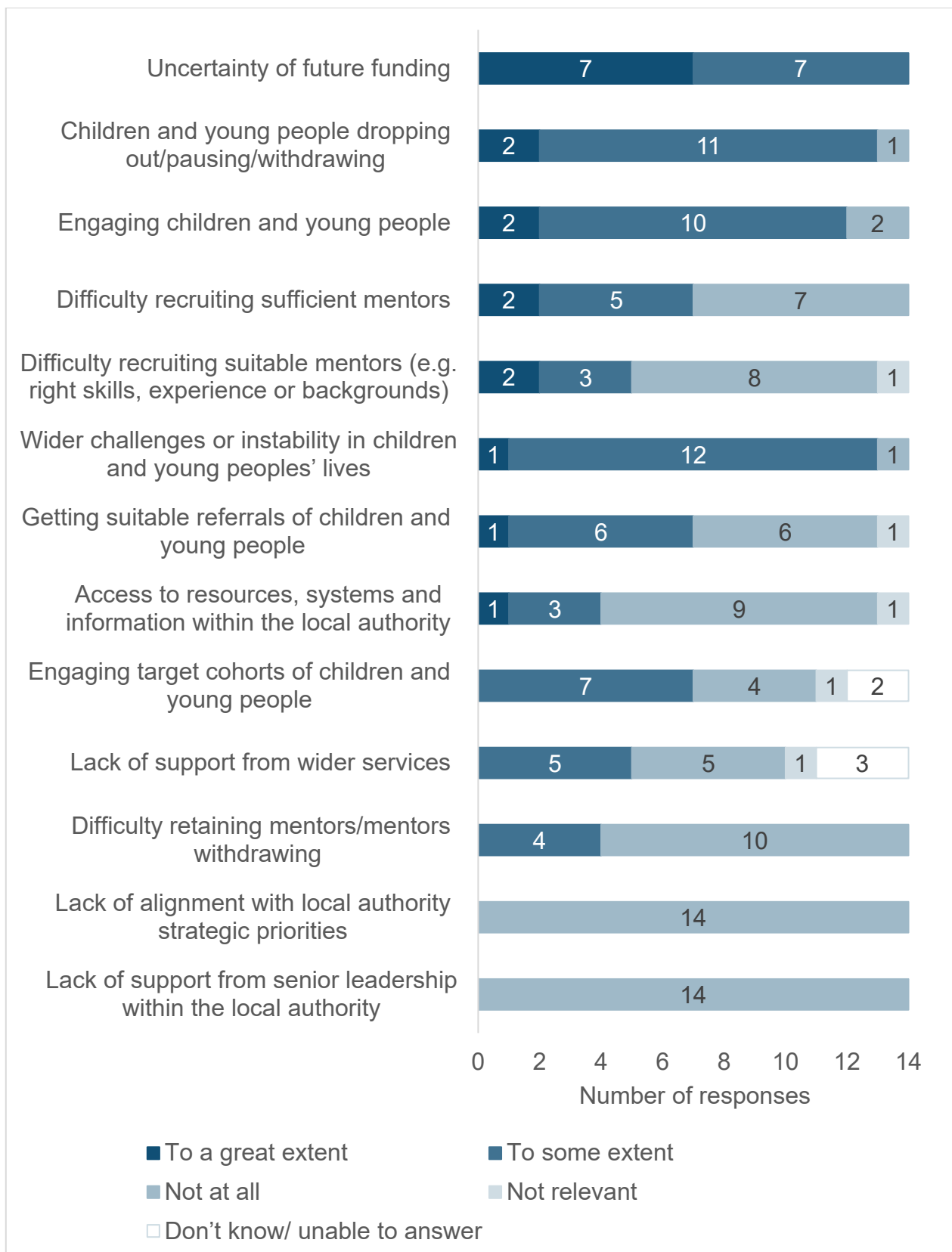
Source: Project Lead Survey (n=12)

Figure A5: Project lead views on the enablers to delivering their Befriending and Mentoring project



Source: Project Lead Survey (n=14)

Figure A6: Project lead views on the barriers to delivering their Befriending and Mentoring project



Source: Project Lead Survey (n=14)

MI data: additional data tables**Table A9: Number of placements/housing arrangements experienced in the last 12 months (Family Finding)**

Number of placements/housing arrangements (N=1,463)	n	Mean
1	837	57%
2	420	29%
3	116	8%
4	41	3%
5	17	1%
6	11	1%
7 or more	21	1%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

Table A10: Number of placements/housing arrangements experienced in the last 12 months (Befriending and Mentoring)

Number of placements/housing arrangements (N=765)	n	Mean
1	462	60%
2	203	27%
3	76	10%
4	13	2%
5	6	1%
6	2	0%
7 or more	3	0%

Source: Ecorys analysis of MI data

Children and Young People Survey: Additional data and tables

Demographics of Family Finding respondents

For the unmatched sample, there was a near even split between male (49%) and female participants (47%), which was also the case for those with baseline (46%, 49%) and endline responses (45%, 51%). Most participants were White (71%), which was similar for baseline (68%) and endline (74%) respondents. However, there were no Asian respondents in the endline sample (compared with 3% of baseline respondents) and fewer Black respondents (7% at endline compared with 17% at baseline).

The baseline sample included children aged 4-7 years (3%) and 8-11 years (9%), whereas the endline sample comprised only 11–17-year-olds (40%) and care leavers (60%). This is reflected in where participants in the baseline and endline samples were living – a greater proportion at endline were living in a flat or house they rented/owned (33%) than at baseline (24%).

In the matched sample (N=11), all participants were 11-17 years (36%) or care leavers (64%). The majority were female (73%), and White (73%).

Demographics of Befriending and Mentoring respondents

For the unmatched sample, there was a near even split between male (52%) and female participants (48%), which was also the case for those with only baseline (51%, 49%) and only endline responses (52%, 48%). Almost three-quarters of the participants were White (73%), with a greater proportion of White participants at endline (75%) than at baseline (70%). At baseline there were a greater proportion of Black participants (15%) than at endline (8%).

At baseline, there were only participants from 11-17 (57%) and care leaver (43%) age groups, whereas the endline sample included 4–7-year-olds (9%), 8–11-year-olds (16%), as well as 11–17-year-olds (73%) and a small number of care leavers (2%). In line with this, a greater proportion of the endline sample were living with foster carers (32% vs 17%), with family and friends (28% vs 18%), or in a residential home (24% vs 8%) than at baseline.

In the matched sample (N=19), most participants were aged 11-17 years (89%), with a small number of care leavers and 8–11-year-olds. Just over half were female (56%), and the majority were White (89%).

Participants' responses to Children and Young People Survey questions

Table A11: Family Finding participants' responses to Children and Young People Survey questions

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
Like school	Yes	23 (74%)	14 (56%)	0.17 (56)	1 ⁶² (<5)
Like school	No	8 (26%)	11 (44%)	0.17 (56)	1 ⁶³ (<5)
Feel settled at home	Yes	41 (64%)	40 (55%)	0.35 (137)	1 (11)
Feel settled at home	No	23 (36%)	33 (45%)	0.35 (137)	1 (11)
Feel safe at home	Yes	47 (73%)	54 (75%)	0.99 (136)	1 (11)
Feel safe at home	No	17 (27%)	18 (25%)	0.99 (136)	1 (11)
Have a good friend	Yes	56 (88%)	65 (89%)	0.80 (137)	1 (11)
Have a good friend	No	8 (13%)	8 (11%)	0.80 (137)	1 (11)
An adult has explained why they are in care	Explained	44 (69%)	53 (74%)	0.66 (136)	1 (11)
An adult has explained why they are in care	Not fully explained	20 (31%)	19 (26%)	0.66 (136)	1 (11)
Get outdoors	Everyday/<once	27 (79%)	26 (90%)	0.32 (63)	12 (<5)
Get outdoors	Once/not at all	7 (21%)	<5 (10%)	0.32 (63)	12 (<5)

⁶² No discordant pairs, meaning no participants changed their response.

⁶³ No discordant pairs, meaning no participants changed their response.

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
Do similar things to friends	Always/sometimes	48 (79%)	61 (86%)	0.36 (132)	0.25 (11)
Do similar things to friends	Hardly ever/never	13 (21%)	10 (14%)	0.36 (132)	0.25 (11)
Have a trusted adult	Yes	55 (89%)	69 (96%)	0.19 (134)	1 ⁶⁴ (11)
Have a trusted adult	No	7 (11%)	<5 (4%)	0.19 (134)	1 ⁶⁵ (11)
Feel they belong in local area	Always/sometimes	50 (89%)	61 (85%)	0.60 (128)	1 ¹ (11)
Feel they belong in local area	Hardly ever/never	6 (11%)	11 (15%)	0.60 (128)	1 ¹ (11)
Feel safe in local area	Always/sometimes	54 (96%)	71 (99%)	0.58 (128)	1 ² (11)
Feel safe in local area	Hardly ever/never	<5 (4%)	<5 (1%)	0.58 (128)	1 ² (11)
Have someone who listens to them	Yes	60 (97%)	65 (93%)	0.45 (132)	1 ⁶⁶ (11)
Have someone who listens to them	No	<5 (3%)	5 (7%)	0.45 (132)	1 ⁶⁷ (11)
Have someone	Yes	56 (92%)	66 (96%)	0.47 (130)	1 ¹ (11)

⁶⁴ All matched participants reported the same answer (not a 2x2 table) at pre and post-test.

⁶⁵ All matched participants reported the same answer (not a 2x2 table) at pre and post-test.

⁶⁶ All matched participants reported the same answer at post-test (not a 2x2 table).

⁶⁷ All matched participants reported the same answer at post-test (not a 2x2 table).

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
telling them they have done well					
Have someone telling them they have done well	No	5 (8%)	<5 (4%)	0.47 (130)	1 ¹ (11)
Have someone who believes in their success	Yes	54 (96%)	58 (91%)	0.28 (120)	1 (11)
Have someone who believes in their success	No	<5 (4%)	6 (9%)	0.28 (120)	1 (11)
Practicing life skills	Always/sometimes	27 (96%)	20 (100%)	0.49 (57)	1 ² (<5)
Practicing life skills	Hardly ever/never	<5 (4%)	0 (0%)	0.49 (57)	1 ² (<5)
Spending time on hobbies or activities	Always/sometimes	28 (100%)	29 (100%)	1 ² (57)	1 ² (<5)
Spending time on hobbies or activities	Hardly ever/never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 ² (57)	1 ² (<5)
Feel lonely	Often/always	6 (11%)	<5 (6%)	0.49 (107)	1 ² (<5)
Feel lonely	Sometimes/hardly ever/never	49 (89%)	49 (94%)	0.49 (107)	1 ² (<5)

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
Contact Mum	Right	13 (41%)	12 (48%)	0.77 (57)	1 ⁶⁸ (<5)
Contact Mum	Wrong	19 (59%)	13 (52%)	0.77 (57)	1 ⁶⁹ (<5)
Contact Dad	Right	6 (19%)	<5 (11%)	0.48 (60)	1 ¹ (<5)
Contact Dad	Wrong	26 (81%)	25 (89%)	0.48 (60)	1 ¹ (<5)
Contact with either parent	Right	16 (47%)	12 (41%)	0.84 (63)	1 (<5)
Contact with either parent	Wrong	18 (53%)	17 (59%)	0.84 (63)	1 (<5)
Contact siblings	Right	11 (34%)	12 (44%)	0.60 (59)	1 ¹ (<5)
Contact siblings	Wrong	21 (66%)	15 (56%)	0.60 (59)	1 ¹ (<5)
Enjoy time	Always/sometimes	28 (100%)	29 (100%)	0.89 (57)	1 ² (<5)
Enjoy time	Hardly ever/never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0.89 (57)	1 ² (<5)
Worry about feelings/behaviour	Always/sometimes	44 (73%)	46 (66%)	0.45 (130)	0.48 (11)
Worry about feelings/behaviour	Hardly ever/never	16 (27%)	24 (34%)	0.45 (130)	0.48 (11)
Getting help with feelings/behaviour	Yes	41 (89%)	31 (67%)	0.02 (92)	1 (6)

⁶⁸ All matched participants reported the same answer at pre-test (not a 2x2 table).

⁶⁹ All matched participants reported the same answer at pre-test (not a 2x2 table).

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
Getting help with feelings/behaviour	No	5 (11%)	15 (33%)	0.02 (92)	1 (6)
Support from no one	Yes	<5 (2%)	<5 (4%)	0.63 (129)	1 ⁴ (11)
Support from no one	No	55 (98%)	70 (96%)	0.63 (129)	1 ⁴ (11)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A12: Befriending and Mentoring participants' responses to Children and Young People Survey questions

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
Like school	Yes	23 (66%)	99 (81%)	0.09 (157)	0.25 (13)
Like school	No	12 (34%)	23 (19%)	0.09 (157)	0.25 (13)
Feel settled at home	Yes	34 (47%)	88 (66%)	0.006 (206)	0.68 (17)
Feel settled at home	No	39 (53%)	45 (34%)	0.006 (206)	0.68 (17)
Feel safe at home	Yes	49 (67%)	107 (81%)	0.049 (206)	1 (18)
Feel safe at home	No	24 (33%)	26 (20%)	0.049 (206)	1 (18)
Have a good friend	Yes	52 (70%)	76 (58%)	0.10 (206)	1 (18)
Have a good friend	No	22 (30%)	56 (42%)	0.10 (206)	1 (18)
An adult has explained	Explained	57 (83%)	100 (76%)	0.35 (201)	1 (18)

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
why they are in care					
An adult has explained why they are in care	Not fully explained	12 (17%)	32 (24%)	0.35 (201)	1 (18)
Get outdoors	Everyday/< once	27 (64%)	66 (56%)	0.48 (159)	0.18 (18)
Get outdoors	Once/not at all	15 (36%)	51 (44%)	0.48 (159)	0.18 (18)
Do similar things to friends	Always/sometimes	50 (68%)	48 (40%)	0.0004 (193)	0.07 (19)
Do similar things to friends	Hardly ever/never	24 (32%)	71 (60%)	0.0004 (193)	0.07 (19)
Have a trusted adult	Yes	62 (85%)	114 (94%)	0.04 (194)	1 ⁴ (18)
Have a trusted adult	No	11 (15%)	7 (6%)	0.04 (194)	1 ⁴ (18)
Feel they belong in local area	Always/sometimes	59 (81%)	92 (93%)	0.02 (172)	1 (17)
Feel they belong in local area	Hardly ever/never	14 (19%)	7 (7%)	0.02 (172)	1 (17)
Feel safe in local area	Always/sometimes	68 (93%)	100 (100%)	0.01 (173)	1 ¹ (17)
Feel safe in local area	Hardly ever/never	5 (7%)	0 (0%)	0.01 (173)	1 ¹ (17)
Have someone	Yes	66 (93%)	116 (97%)	0.30 (191)	1 (19)

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
who listens to them					
Have someone who listens to them	No	5 (7%)	<5 (3%)	0.35 (201)	1 (18)
Have someone telling them they have done well	Yes	65 (92%)	113 (96%)	0.34 (189)	1 ⁴ (18)
Have someone telling them they have done well	No	6 (8%)	5 (4%)	0.34 (189)	1 ⁴ (18)
Have someone who believes in their success	Yes	66 (96%)	92 (95%)	1 (166)	1 (17)
Have someone who believes in their success	No	<5 (4%)	5 (5%)	1 (166)	1 (17)
Practicing life skills	Always/sometimes	34 (83%)	67 (69%)	0.14 (138)	1 (16)
Practicing life skills	Hardly ever/never	7 (17%)	30 (31%)	0.14 (138)	1 (16)
Spending time on hobbies or activities	Always/sometimes	38 (91%)	86 (90%)	1 (138)	0.65 (16)

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
Spending time on hobbies or activities	Hardly ever/never	<5 (10%)	10 (10%)	1 (138)	0.65 (16)
Feel lonely	Often/always	12 (17%)	0 (0%)	0.0004 (153)	1 ¹ (10)
Feel lonely	Sometimes/hardly ever/never	60 (83%)	81 (100%)	0.0004 (153)	1 ¹ (10)
Contact Mum	Right	14 (38%)	26 (25%)	0.20	1 (18)
Contact Mum	Wrong	23 (62%)	78 (75%)	0.20	1 (18)
Contact Dad	Right	7 (21%)	9 (9%)	0.06 (137)	1 (16)
Contact Dad	Wrong	26 (79%)	95 (91%)	0.06 (137)	1 (16)
Contact with either parent	Right	18 (49%)	31 (29%)	0.05 (144)	1 (18)
Contact with either parent	Wrong	19 (51%)	76 (71%)	0.05 (144)	1 (18)
Contact siblings	Right	9 (27%)	45 (41%)	0.16 (145)	0.62 (16)
Contact siblings	Wrong	25 (74%)	66 (60%)	0.16 (145)	0.62 (16)
Enjoy time	Always/sometimes	38 (91%)	86 (90%)	1 (138)	1 (16)
Enjoy time	Hardly ever/never	4 (10%)	10 (10%)	1 (138)	1 (16)
Worry about feelings/behaviour	Always/sometimes	53 (73%)	99 (85%)	0.07 (190)	0.22 (18)
Worry about	Hardly ever/never	20 (27%)	18 (15%)	0.07 (190)	0.22 (18)

Question	Response	Baseline unmatched	Endline unmatched	Sig. unmatched (N)	Sig. matched (N)
feelings/behaviour					
Getting help with feelings/behaviour	Yes	37 (69%)	84 (87%)	0.01 (151)	0.68 (11)
Getting help with feelings/behaviour	No	17 (32%)	13 (13%)	0.01 (151)	0.68 (11)
Support from no one	Yes	0 (0%)	<5 (3%)	0.26 (174)	1 ¹ (17)
Support from no one	No	74 (100%)	97 (97%)	0.26 (174)	1 ¹ (17)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Wellbeing categorisations for unmatched and matched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline and endline

Table A13: Wellbeing categorisations for unmatched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness (N=55, 73)	8 (15%)	16 (29%)	15 (27%)	16 (29%)
Life satisfaction (N=56, 72)	12 (22%)	17 (31%)	12 (22%)	15 (27%)
Life worthwhile (N=55, 71)	5 (9%)	18 (33%)	14 (26%)	18 (32.7%)
Positivity about future (N=54, 72)	10 (19%)	11 (20%)	19 (35%)	14 (26%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A14: Wellbeing categorisations for unmatched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness (N=55, 73)	9 (12%)	19 (26%)	24 (33%)	21 (29%)
Life satisfaction (N=56, 72)	16 (22.2%)	17 (24%)	18 (25%)	21 (29%)
Life worthwhile (N=55, 71)	9 (12.7%)	22 (31%)	23 (33%)	17 (24%)
Positivity about future (N=54, 72)	8 (11.1%)	27 (37.5%)	17 (24%)	20 (28%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A15: Wellbeing categorisations for matched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness(N=11)	<5 (18%)	<5 (18%)	<5 (36%)	<5 (27%)
Life satisfaction (N=11)	<5 (18%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)
Life worthwhile(N=10)	<5 (20%)	<5 (30%)	<5 (30%)	<5 (20%)
Positivity about future (N=11)	<5 (18%)	<5 (26%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (18%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A16: Wellbeing categorisations for matched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness(N=11)	<5 (18%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)
Life satisfaction (N=11)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (18%)
Life worthwhile(N=10)	<5 (30%)	<5 (20%)	<5 (20%)	<5 (30%)
Positivity about future (N=11)	<5 (27%)	<5 (9%)	5 (46%)	<5 (18%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A17: Wellbeing (anxiety) categorisations for unmatched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Anxiety (N=26, 43)	9 (35%)	<5 (8%)	5 (19%)	10 (39%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A18: Wellbeing (anxiety) categorisations for unmatched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Anxiety (N=26, 43)	8 (19%)	10 (23%)	13 (30%)	12 (28%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A19: Wellbeing (anxiety) categorisations for matched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Anxiety (N=7)	<5 (43%)	<5 (14%)	<5 (29%)	<5 (14%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A20: Wellbeing (anxiety) categorisations for matched Family Finding participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Anxiety (N=7)	<5 (29%)	<5 (29%)	<5 (14%)	<5 (29%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A21: Family Finding participants' (11 to 17-year-olds and care leavers) responses to wellbeing questions at baseline and endline - significance testing based on matched sample

Wellbeing measure	N	Baseline mean score (SD)	Endline mean score (SD)	Sig. (p)
Anxiety	7	3.0 (2.8)	3.7 (3.8)	0.64
Happiness	11	6.8 (2.9)	6.4 (3.5)	0.60
Life satisfaction	11	6.6 (2.7)	5.5 (3.3)	0.19
Life worthwhile	10	6.4 (3.0)	5.9 (3.6)	0.56
Positivity about future	11	6.5 (2.9)	6.0 (3.4)	0.53

Wellbeing categorisations for unmatched and matched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline and endline

Table A22: Wellbeing categorisations for unmatched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness (N=73, 95)	16 (22%)	31 (43%)	14 (19%)	12 (16%)
Life satisfaction (N=73, 95)	21 (29%)	27 (37%)	15 (21%)	10 (14%)
Life worthwhile (N=72, 95)	12 (17%)	32 (44%)	17 (24%)	11 (15%)
Positivity about future (N=72, 95)	18 (25%)	29 (40%)	15 (21%)	10 (14%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A23: Wellbeing categorisations for unmatched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness (N=73, 95)	11 (12%)	45 (47%)	31 (33%)	8 (8%)
Life satisfaction (N=73, 95)	8 (9%)	51 (54%)	29 (31%)	7 (7%)
Life worthwhile (N=72, 95)	7 (7%)	45 (47%)	34 (36%)	9 (10%)
Positivity about future (N=72, 95)	8 (8%)	45 (47%)	35 (37%)	7 (7%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A24: Wellbeing categorisations for matched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness (N=18)	5 (28%)	5 (28%)	5 (28%)	<5 (17%)
Life satisfaction (N=15)	<5 (27%)	<5 (27%)	<5 (13%)	5 (33%)

Life worthwhile (N=16)	<5 (25%)	5 (31%)	<5 (19%)	<5 (25%)
Positivity about future (N=16)	<5 (6%)	7 (44%)	6 (38%)	<5 (13%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A25: Wellbeing categorisations for matched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Happiness (N=18)	<5 (17%)	9 (50%)	<5 (17%)	<5 (17%)
Life satisfaction (N=15)	<5 (27%)	<5 (47%)	<5 (7%)	<5 (20%)
Life worthwhile (N=16)	<5 (19%)	7 (44%)	<5 (19%)	<5 (19%)
Positivity about future (N=16)	5 (31%)	6 (38%)	<5 (13%)	<5 (19%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A26: Wellbeing (anxiety) categorisations for unmatched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at baseline

Wellbeing measure	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Anxiety ⁷⁰ (N=32, 3)	10 (31%)	<5 (9%)	8 (25%)	11 (34%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

Table A27: Wellbeing (anxiety) categorisations for unmatched Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11–17-year-olds and care leavers) at endline

Wellbeing measure	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Anxiety ⁷¹ (N=32, 3)	<5 (67%)	<5 (0%)	<5 (0%)	<5 (33%)

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

⁷⁰ Insufficient anxiety data was available for the matched sample to provide these statistics.

⁷¹ Insufficient anxiety data was available for the matched sample to provide these statistics.

Table A28: Befriending and Mentoring participants' (11- to 17-year-olds and care leavers) responses wellbeing questions at baseline and endline - significance testing based on matched sample

Wellbeing measure	N	Baseline mean score (SD)	Endline mean score (SD)	Sig. (p)
Anxiety	<5 ⁷²	N/A	N/A	N/A
Happiness	18	5.6 (3.2)	6.1 (2.1)	0.44
Life satisfaction	15	6.2 (3.0)	5.6 (2.5)	0.32
Life worthwhile	16	6.1 (3.1)	6.2 (2.3)	0.88
Positivity about future	18	6.3 (2.2)	5.9 (2.4)	0.61

Source: Coram analysis of Children and Young People Survey data

⁷² Sample size too small to compute.



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