"Talking to me as if I was somebody":
Report of an evaluation of Matches Mentoring Project

by

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CONTENTS PAGE

Acknowledgements

Section 1: Introduction

Background

The purpose of the evaluation was to assist the big step partnership in identifying the future direction of the Matches Mentoring Project, particularly in light of a proposed union with Quarriers' Befriending Project in 2004/5. It was considered important that external evaluation was carried out and in February 2003, the big step commissioned Dr Julie Ridley, an independent research consultant to carry out the work.

This report outlines the aims and objectives of the evaluation carried out over a three-month period (from February-April 2003); the methods used to gather the views of a range of stakeholders (including mentees, mentors and other key stakeholders); presents and discusses the findings. The final Section provides key recommendations arising from the research.

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation broadly aimed to review the outcomes for individual young people and examine the experience of mentoring, as well as overall effectiveness of the project. Its six key objectives, as defined by the commissioners, were to:

- Assess levels of satisfaction with the project including with the mentor training programme;

- Evaluate the impact of mentoring relationships on self-esteem, confidence, social isolation, and success with the transition to independence, and the uptake of other services

- Gather information about aspirations for the project

- Identify any obstacles, barriers, or constraints in the project's development and operation

- Review the role of partner agencies and the role and function of the Steering Group

- Make recommendations for the ongoing development of the project with specific reference to plans for amalgamation.

Design & methods

The main aim was to develop an understanding of the project and its impact from a range of perspectives, and to do so in a relatively short time. It was therefore, decided to use mainly qualitative one-to-one and group interviews to gather the views of those involved with providing and managing the service as well as those benefiting from mentoring. While it had been proposed that a participative approach to the research be adopted, with young people being recruited and trained as 'peer researchers', this was not possible within the time and budget available. However, the content and format of proposed interview questions were discussed with a group of five young people recruited through the big step Health Reference Group. Interviews were supplemented by an analysis of the documents and monitoring information obtained from the project to provide contextual information.

Interviews

Interviews were undertaken with three different sets of informant: a sample of young people who were mentees, volunteer mentors and key stakeholders (as defined by the Project Coordinator). Interview schedules were designed as largely open-ended with the aim of gathering a range of perspectives on a topic and exploring issues in more depth, although some quantitative information was collected. Mentees and mentors were given a gift voucher for participating.

Interviews with key stakeholders

Seven individual interviews were carried out face-to-face with members of the Steering Group including the big step Social Support Officer who was coordinating the project. The key stakeholders included representatives from Who Cares? Scotland, Kelly Mason Training, Glasgow Mentoring Network, the big step, Glasgow Leaving Care Services and Quarriers. A planned interview with a representative of the Prince's Trust did not prove possible within the timeframe for the fieldwork.

The stakeholder interviews explored the following key topics:

- Involvement with the project
- Role and effectiveness of the Steering Group
- The purpose of Matches Project
- Strengths and weaknesses of Matches
- Perceptions of the impact on young people
- Aspirations and ideas for development

At the start of the evaluation, a semi-structured interview with the Social Support Officer gathered more detailed background information about the project's resources, its staffing, volunteers, service users and operation. In addition to gathering information on the same generic topics as for other key stakeholders, the Social Support Officer as coordinator of the project, was asked to provide information on:

- The history (outline) of the project, its philosophy and funding
- Working practices and systems
- Available statistics – numbers of referrals, mentors recruited, matches etc
- Reporting and accountability arrangements
- Ways the project is publicised
- Recruitment, training and support of mentors
- Evaluation and feedback mechanisms

The interview with the existing training provider (Kelly Mason Training) further explored the arrangements for and the content of the core training programme provided to volunteer mentors.

Interviews with mentees

A flyer explaining the research and advertising the incentive for participating in the evaluation (£10 gift voucher plus travel expenses), was sent out before contact was made with young people. They were then contacted by the Social Support Officer over a three-week period and asked to participate in an interview. While it had been planned to interview eight mentees, just six young people (2 male; 4 female) agreed to be interviewed when invited and all interviews were carried out at the big step offices. This represented around 15% of those who had been referred over the life of the project (39 referrals), and approximately 43% of those who had experienced a mentoring relationship through Matches.

It was hoped to include young people at different stages with the project, including those in current mentoring relationships, as well as others whose mentoring relationship had ended in the past six months. The emphasis was as far as possible, on ensuring a spread of partnerships, gender, age, and in terms of the length of time and stage of the mentoring relationship. With a longer timeframe, it might have been possible to interview a sample of young people who had been through the induction meeting but had never been matched with a mentor.

In practice, there were fewer mentees to approach for interview than originally envisaged. Several mentoring relationships had ceased because the mentee or mentor had lost contact over the Christmas and New Year period. Thus only two of the eight relationships originally identified were active and one young person had left the Glasgow area to return to the parental home. After several attempts to arrange a visit to this young person's home, it did not prove practicable to set up an interview. Another young person had recently left their residential school and did not wish to continue to see their mentor, or to be involved in the research. This left six out of the eight young people originally identified.

The table below provides summary information about the mentees interviewed. It shows that the six mentees interviewed were predominantly female, living in a variety of places. Only two of those interviewed were currently in a mentoring relationship. Half of the mentoring relationships had lasted a year or less, while half had lasted over a year:

Table 1: Profile of mentees interviewed during the evaluation

Variable	Description	Number
Gender	Male	2
	Female	4
Age	16-18	3
	19-21	1
	Over 21	2
Living Situation	With parents	1
	Hostel	2
	Independent	2
	Supported carer	1
Currently has mentor	Yes	2
	No	4
Length of time had mentor	3-6 months	2
	7-12 months	1
	Over 1 year	3

The interview schedule was devised with reference to the postal questionnaire used by York University in their evaluation of mentor projects in England for the Prince's Trust. The content and format of proposed questions were discussed with a consultation group of five young people recruited through the big step Health Reference Group especially for the purpose. The interview covered the following topics:

- Young people's experiences of accessing the service
- Satisfaction with the mentoring relationship
- Young people's perceptions of the impact of mentoring
- Young people's perceptions of the impact on supporting independent living
- Identification of problems & issues
- Ideas for future developments

Interviews with mentors

Around 13% of volunteer mentors (8 out of 61) who had been involved with the project over the past two and half years were approached to participate in the evaluation. It was necessary to use a mixture of methods to fit in with mentors' availability. Individual interviews were arranged with five mentors (4 female: 1 male) and one group interview with a further three mentors (1 female: 2 male). Two individual interviews were conducted by telephone, while three were face-to-face. All interviews, including the group interview took place at the big step offices. Notes were taken during interviews and the group interview was tape recorded and transcribed in full.

Volunteers at different stages of the mentoring relationship were approached by the big step Social Support Officer in the first instance. The corresponding mentee was interviewed in the case of five of the mentors, even though only one of these was currently in a mentoring relationship. One mentor had recently left the project to become a volunteer befriender, and another had left the project due to changes in their personal circumstances.

Both individual and group interviews with mentors covered the following topics:

- Motivation to become a mentor with Matches
- Experience of being a mentor
- Views of recruitment, training and support provided
- Satisfaction with the project and the mentoring relationship
- Perceptions of the impact on the young person's life
- Identification of problems and issues
- Ideas for future development/improvements

Analysis of Written Documents

Promotional information about the project, such as annual reports and monitoring reports, as well as the proformas used to support operational processes (such as referral, mentor and mentee profiles, and forms for monitoring mentoring relationships) were gathered from the Social Support Officer as supporting material to the evaluation. In addition, there was access to the training manual and a file of information given to mentors. This provided background information about the setting up of the project, its development and current operational processes.

While there was limited time to carry out a full analysis of all the documentation produced by the project and the training provider, these documents provided a valuable context for informants' comments and, where appropriate, are referred to in this report.

Section 2: Organisation & Management

Introduction

In this Section, information from interviews with key stakeholders and project documentation is brought together to provide a picture of the purpose of the Matches Mentoring Project, its activities, its' operational systems and management structure including the perceived effectiveness of the Steering Group, and the project's staffing structure.

Historical overview

The Matches Mentoring Project started in May 2000 with funding from the Prince's Trust Leaving Care Initiative. Matches set up the first mentoring relationship in October that year. The Prince's Trust, which from 1999 had provided funds for mentoring programmes for care leavers in England, had decided to extend this support to Scotland. This fund aimed to help young people leaving care by introducing them to a range of new opportunities through grants and programmes run by the Prince's Trust, and second, by offering young people aged 16-21 years, support from a volunteer mentor.

These mentoring programmes were intended to tackle the vulnerability and disadvantage experienced by many young people leaving care and who have left care. It is now well established for instance, that they leave care sooner than most other young people leave home, and they are more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment, educational disadvantage and early parenthood, social isolation and exclusion than their peers (Dixon & Stein, 2002). Even so, they often remain positive about their lives and responsive to support from people who respect and encourage them (Prince's Trust, 2002). Further, Stein and Dixon (2002) highlight good social networks as a predictor of success in leaving care.

Matches was created as a partnership project between the big step (Care Leavers Social Inclusion Partnership) and Glasgow Mentoring Network. The latter is a membership organisation in Glasgow for companies with an interest or involvement in mentoring. The salary of the coordinator of the project and running costs were contributed by the big step, and this was supplemented by a grant from the Prince's Trust. Approximately two thirds of the Social Support Officer's time was spent coordinating Matches.

Understanding of the aims

The stated aims of Matches project were to:

> *"Provide a mentoring service to young people leaving care and assist them as*
> *they settle into their communities. The aim is to enhance the chances of the*

> *young person making a successful and sustainable transition to independence"* (the big step report, 2003; Matches Training Pack)

Its stated objectives had been to recruit and train 50 volunteer mentors; to match at least 35 young people with a mentor; and to support the mentor and young person throughout the period of the support programme. The following statement about the key aims was typical:

> *"It's about supporting young people leaving various settings into effective independent tenancies and developing the skill set to maintain themselves."*

They emphasised the importance of enabling young people to develop the skills that would ensure "they have a home and not just a flat". Commonly they believed having the support of a mentor would increase individuals' self-confidence, ultimately "empowering young people to take more control" of their own lives, for example one key stakeholder commented:

> *"Matches provides support to young people leaving care, social support with the long term aim that they are more confident in making their own decisions. It's to give young people the confidence, or the courage to seek that from others."* (Key stakeholder)

Placing greater emphasis on task and goal orientation, one key stakeholder defined the purpose of Matches as being about providing "practical support" to help young people leaving care meet their ambitions in terms of, for instance, their housing, education and employment aspirations. It was about "being an example to a young person" and helping to "raise aspirations". Another stated:

> *"It's an additional lift for young people – kids who often have their chins on the ground. About helping them look towards their future."* (Key stakeholder)

While there was consensus among key stakeholders along the same lines as the official stated aim, there were contrasting (though not necessarily conflicting) emphases in relation to its objectives. Matches was perceived to have the following four main objectives, that is to:

1. Provide social support to tackle social isolation,
2. Enhance the skills of young people
3. Increase young people's self-confidence
4. Provide practical help towards setting and working towards goals.

As a relatively novel approach with young people leaving care, and in Scotland in general, it was acknowledged that Matches was testing out the suitability of the mentoring approach with this group of young people. Because of this, one key stakeholder had been somewhat cautious initially about what the project's aims but because of its success now felt that it was about "consolidating the project as it develops" and learning from the evaluation.

A different type of relationship

When defining the purpose of Matches, key stakeholders commonly chose to define it in terms of the quality of the mentoring relationship and the difference with support provided to young people by paid professionals such as social workers. A further distinction was made with befriending in terms of the focus within the mentoring relationships on aspirations and goals. The difference in theory, as expressed in the following quotation, was that:

> *"Mentoring is more directive than befriending. It is time limited and has a sense of focus. Mentoring only kicks in when time limited, focused and a plan is in place." (Key stakeholder)*

In practice however, it was argued this distinction was less clear-cut, for instance, one key stakeholder commented:

> *"There seems to be large elements of befriending in the project. If you look at relationships, might actually be describing befriending." (Key stakeholder)*

Such observations indicated underlying differences of opinion as to where Matches lay on the befriending/mentoring spectrum. For example, while some emphasised the informal support provided by volunteers and through developing this relationship, helping the young person to achieve objectives (befriending/mentoring model), others emphasised how the key role of the volunteer mentor was to develop objectives with the young person even if low key, within a supportive relationship (mentoring/befriending model).

It was also suggested that calling the relationship mentoring might be more "a form of labelling" to attract funding than a reality. The extent to which such a view was borne out by practice was one of the issues explored in this evaluation and has a bearing on how key stakeholders envisioned the project as developing in the future.

Support to homeless young people

Matches project provides support for young people leaving care and, while not a high priority, it also aimed to support young homeless people. Few of the young people using the project so far however, had been homeless. Indeed, there was mixed opinions among key stakeholders about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the mentoring approach with young homeless people, whose lives were typically less stable and more chaotic:

> *"I'd suspect they're living quite chaotic lives and to make mentor relationship work, young person needs to be quite stable…Homeless young people will be focused on day-to-day living and not thinking about meeting up with the mentor." (Key stakeholder)*

It was argued nevertheless, that this should not in itself exclude them from receiving support from Matches. Rather, there were implications for working practices and methods of service delivery. In short, the potential of the project to meet the needs of young homeless people had yet to be realised. The benefits of mentoring to

young homeless people were believed to be the same as for any other young person.

Changes to the aims and objectives

The aims stated above were felt to have been stable throughout the life of the project. It was commented that "in philosophy and essence" the project had remained "quite constant". Young people's needs on leaving care were not felt to have changed dramatically and therefore, the original aims remained valid.

In contrast, its objectives had changed in light of experience. In the words of the big step, the original targets from the Prince's Trust had proved to be "overly optimistic" (big step report, 2003). The target had been to recruit and train 50 volunteer mentors, to match 35 young people leaving care aged 16-21 years with a mentor, and to support these relationships throughout the period of the match. Monitoring information obtained from the project and discussed in the next Section shows the project to have exceeded the target number of volunteers recruited but to have fallen short of the output target of mentoring relationships set up.

The original target constituted 50% of the overall target for the Prince's Trust Leaving Care Initiative in Scotland as a whole, which was to be delivered through seven projects. As such, the target set for Matches appears both inequitable and unrealistic. In 2003, only the Matches project and one other remained out of these seven projects. Another problem encountered had been a drop-out rate among volunteer mentors of around 46%, which although lower than that typically experienced by befriending projects as reported by the Befriending Network in Scotland, still posed problems for a project that relied so heavily on voluntary input.

With additional funding secured through the Social Inclusion Partnership in year two, the big step had been able to extend the target group to include young people up to 25 years. From the first year's experience, it had been clear that older teenagers and those over 20 years had gained most from mentoring relationships. It was suggested this was because older teenagers' lives were more stable and younger teenagers prioritised independence from services over goal setting.

Description of Activities

Matches project recruits, trains and supports volunteer mentors to match them with a young person who is leaving or has left care. Mentoring relationships differ greatly in terms of how often mentee and mentor meet (frequency), the level and type of support that is provided by the mentor (intensity), and what they do (focus of activities), with these elements being tailored to suit the needs of individual young people. The following types of support were identified by the project typical:

- Providing space for the young person to talk through their situation
- Giving a young person the benefit of someone else's experience
- Suggesting strategies
- Helping the young person formulate their own plan of action
- Stimulating interest in social, recreational and leisure activities

- Facilitating the uptake of activities which are of interest to the young person and accompanying them if necessary

(Matches Training Manual for Mentors)

Matches had produced an induction pack for young people referred to the project, which explained mentoring, its role and what the young person should expect. The main criteria for inclusion in the project was that:

> *"The young person understands the role of a mentor and is committed to independence, is willing to try new things and to respect the boundaries between themselves and the mentor." (Key stakeholder)*

In addition to receiving an induction pack, the Social Support Officer arranged an induction meeting with each young person referred and their referrer. This meeting provided an opportunity to explore what the young person hoped to gain from the mentoring relationship and to establish the goals they wish to work towards. Information from the induction meeting together with the referral form was used to create a mentee profile and a record of initial objectives for the mentoring relationship. This information was then used to aid matching with a suitable mentor. Although it was stressed that matching was not "an exact science", efforts were made to match stated preferences of both mentee and mentor.

The selection process for mentors included being assessed by written application form, providing references, agreeing to a police check, participating in a core training programme of five 3-hour sessions, and a review interview with the coordinator and other members of the Steering Group. At the end of training, mentors were equipped with reference materials in the form of a training manual and upon matching, a filofax-style directory of relevant services. Mentors were recruited through a variety of methods including newspaper advertisements, posters, and through the membership of the Steering Group. More recently, project business cards had been produced for members of the Steering Group to pass to potential mentors they can access through their professional networks.

Organisational Structure

At the heart of Matches was the Social Support Officer employed by the big step who related to the multi-agency Steering Group, partner agencies including the big step, volunteers and young people (see Figure 1 below). This Officer was responsible, along with the Glasgow Mentoring Network, for the recruitment, vetting, training and support of volunteer mentors as well as for accepting referrals for potential mentees, making the match between young person and volunteer, and supporting the mentoring relationships thus developed.

Accountability was through a line management structure within the big step and to a multi-agency Steering Group. Key stakeholders commented that having the big step manage the project however, had its limitations. As a service, the project was different from the rest of the big step's work, which was concerned with partnership planning and development:

"I've always had some concerns and issues about how appropriate that is for the big step for instance it's very much a staff office space and not set up to deliver services. Also talking about systems and policies to support delivery of a service – that's where it gets a bit tricky." (Key stakeholder)

The partnership aspect of the project was reflected in the composition of the Steering Group, which had representation from the big step, Glasgow Mentoring Network, Kelly Mason Training, Who Cares? Scotland, Social Work Leaving Care Services and Residential Services, the Prince's Trust, Quarriers, Education Business Partnership, and Glasgow City Council Housing.

While the Social Support Officer was responsible for coordinating the project, in theory the multi-agency involvement through the Steering Group provided opportunities to link into a wide network of contacts for recruiting potential mentors and mentees into the project and brought a wealth of expertise. Training was contracted from a training provider through the Glasgow Mentoring Network

Figure 1: Organisational structure of the Matches project
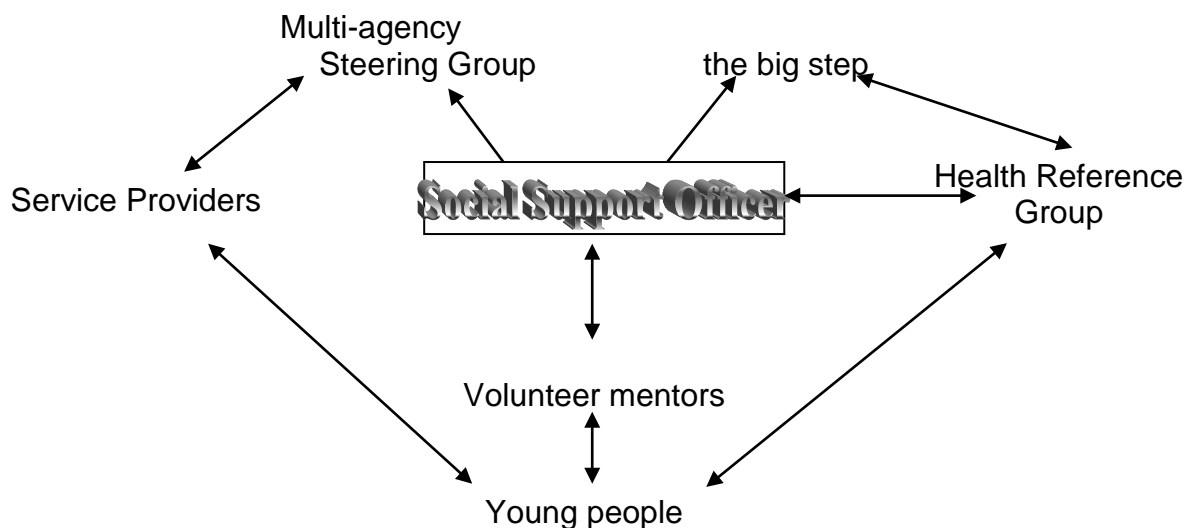
In practice, while the Steering Group was felt to support the project "very well" by most key stakeholders, some were critical that it had not been as effective as it might. It fell to a small core of about six representatives, or the "usual suspects" to attend Steering Group meetings. It was suggested there needed to be involvement in the Steering Group from young people and mentors, as well as from professionals in housing and homelessness services. In the past, the Steering Group had explored how to involve young people through the big step Health Reference Group and, while young people had chosen not to become members of the Steering Group, they had given detailed feedback on the contents of the Mentee Induction Pack and were involved in discussions about the appropriateness of the mentoring model for young people leaving care. Also, the Steering Group had at one stage included a representative from the homelessness/housing sector but with changes in personnel, this was no longer the case and it was perceived as a gap.

Key stakeholders were in general positive about the Steering Group and the way it supported Matches. However, while some reported that Steering Group meetings were a "nice size and quite focused", others claimed there did not appear to be "any new discovery" in the meetings. Consequently, it was felt to have become, " an ideas generating forum as opposed to action based". Another key stakeholder stated that although "not ineffective", the group "could do more" thus indicating that it had potential to be more effective. Some key stakeholders (not the Social Support Officer it has to be said), were concerned about the implications for the support provided by this group to the Social Support Officer, who was often left with the main responsibility to "carry the project forward" .

Summary

Over the past two years, Matches had developed partnerships and effective working practices that had supported the project's overall aims well. A multi-agency Steering Group managed and directed the Project, which included the main partners (the big step and the Glasgow Mentoring Network). Key stakeholders shared the same aims overall but there were differences over objectives reflecting different approaches towards the role of mentoring versus befriending. While the mutli-agency Steering Group was generally working well to support the project, some felt it could improve. There was a need to build on the work to date to promote further involvement of young people and mentors.

There appeared to be different views as to where Matches lay on the befriending/mentoring spectrum. While some emphasised the importance of the informal support and through this working towards agreed objectives (befriending/mentoring), others emphasised the key role was to develop objectives with the young person, even if low key (mentoring/befriending). Others were less concerned about rigid definitions of mentoring versus befriending and emphasised the importance of flexible support to young people.

Uptake of the service by young homeless people had clearly been minimal and key stakeholders questioned whether the approach of mentoring was an appropriate one with young homeless people. However, it was felt a review of how the project was promoted to this group was required, and that the Steering Group needed to seek participation from local authority housing and/or homelessness services to help them address this area.

Section 2 Recommendations

- **The partnership should explore how current management structures can be strengthened so that they provide more effective support to the Social Support Officer/project coordinator**

- **The Social Support Officer in discussion with the Steering Group should explore the implications for service delivery and approach if the service is to meet the needs of young homeless people**

- **The Steering Group should discuss how the project can build upon the consultation work undertaken with young people through the big step Health Reference Group and how mentors could participate in the Steering Group**

Section 3: Mentees and Mentors

Introduction

Monitoring information about the volunteers recruited during the lifetime of Matches Project and the young people who had been referred, is now presented in Section 3. This information provides the context against which comments from volunteer mentors and mentees about their experiences have been explored. Mentors and mentees were asked about their experiences of accessing or being involved with Matches as well as how well they felt they had been supported.

Profile of mentees

Over the life of the project, 39 young people had been referred to Matches: 14 of these had been matched up with a mentor (see Table 4 below). The target had been to match at least 35 young people with a mentor. At the time of the evaluation, over three quarters of those referred (77%) were classed as now 'closed' to the project and 'no longer interested' in mentoring. The majority of these (70%) had never been in a mentoring relationship at all while nine had been matched with a mentor but the mentoring relationship had ended. This included both planned and unplanned endings. See Table 2 below for details.

Table 2: Detail of Referral Status

Status of Referral	Description	Number
Active (N=17)	Matched	2
	Awaiting match	3
	Awaiting re-match	3
	Now 'closed'	9
Closed (N=21)	YP not interested	3
	YP didn't attend induction	3
	YP didn't attend match	1
	Didn't meet criteria	2
	Difficulties arranging induction	2
	YP circumstanced changed	5
	Unable to arrange induction	5

The two main reasons for mentoring relationship ending reported from the monitoring statistics, included that the young person had moved away from the area (4 young people) or the mentoring relationship had ended and the young person declined to be re-matched with another mentor (5 young people).

Of the 21 who were never matched with a mentor, 10 were referred but didn't get as far as the initial induction meeting involving the young person, referrer and the Social Support Officer. This was either because the young person did not turn up (3

referrals), delays in arranging the induction and the young person had then lost interest (2 referrals) or the Social Support Officer had had no response when she had tried to set up an induction meeting (5 referrals).

A further eight young people had either changed their minds and decided mentoring was not for them (3 referrals), or their circumstances were stated to have changed by the referrer in that they no longer needed a mentor or their lives had become too chaotic to benefit from having a mentor (5 referrals). Just two young people did not meet the referral criteria and one young person did not attend the match meeting.

Only two mentoring relationships were in existence at the time of the evaluation and two other had been matched with befrienders through the Quarriers scheme. Three were waiting to be matched and a further three were waiting to be re-matched due to a breakdown in their mentoring relationship.

As in the Prince's Trust research (2002), gender was fairly equally represented although there were slightly more males (54%) than females (46%) referred. The majority (61%) who had encountered Matches project were over 19 years. From monitoring information, seven were identified as young people with a disability: three had a mental health problem, two were registered as blind, one had a learning disability and another had self-harmed. The ethnicity of all, except one, was White UK.

Table 3: Age of young people referred to the project over 2 years

Age	Number	Percent
16 yrs	2	5
17 yrs	4	10
18 yrs	4	10
19 yrs	6	15
20 yrs	5	13
21 yrs	2	5
22 yrs and over	11	28
Not known	5	13
TOTAL	**39**	**100***

(*does not sum 100 due to rounding)

Young people had been referred from a range of sources but predominantly they had been referred from Social Work (67% of referrals were from Leaving Care Services and Area Teams). There were just two self-referrals to the project and one from a family member. Table 4 below summarises information about referral sources.

Table 4: Sources of referral to Matches project

Referral Source	Number	Percent
Leaving Care Services	19	49
Area Team	11	28
Self	2	5
Who Cares? Scotland	2	5
Residential Unit	2	5
Family	1	3
Launchpad (now Positive Futures)	1	3
Quarriers	1	3
TOTAL	**39**	**100***

*does not sum 100 due to rounding

Given the majority of referrals came from Social Work there might be some merit in working more closely with Social Work to ensure staff and then young people fully understand the role of mentors prior to making a referral to Matches. The low numbers of young people following through to a successful match with a volunteer mentor suggests that although staff perceive there to be benefits, young people themselves remain to be convinced.

Mentee's experiences of Matches

Young people tended to remember their Leaving Care Services worker or Social Worker as initially putting them in touch with Matches (4 mentees). One could not remember, and another had become aware of the project when the Social Support Officer visited the young people's unit to speak about Matches Project. What young people remember referrers emphasising about the project was getting help to find work or training and the social aspect of having a mentor:

> *"It was if I needed any help getting a job or taking me for coffee."*

Five out of the six mentees interviewed recalled the Social Support Officer from the big step meeting with them to further explain the role of a mentor ; the remaining one could not remember if this had happened. There had therefore been an initial input of information about the nature of mentoring and what might be expected from the relationship with both the referring officer and Matches project staff

There were four main reasons why young people had wanted a mentor. They were to have someone to talk to; to have someone to advise; to help increase self-confidence; and the fourth was that the mentor would provide support for the young person when leaving care. They were ideally looking for mentors with "a sense of humour", who were "honest and up front", but especially "someone who would listen". In particular, a mentor was expected to be:

> *"Maybe someone I could share the same interests with. Someone who wasn't in your face and maybe someone to talk to or go for coffees."*

A key quality in an ideal mentor was that they would be able to offer practical advice and help with for example, housing or a job. Young people anticipated that mentors would guide and navigate them through various systems, but without being part of any official system. The important quality in a 'good mentor' was that they would not tell the young person what to do, but would have the knowledge to point them in the right direction.

The words that came to mind for mentees when asked to describe what it was like to have a mentor were that it was "quite good" or "quite helpful", that it was "handy", "useful" and that it was "worthwhile". A mentor was "someone who is confidential and is for you", someone who listened to young people's problems.

Commonly those interviewed had seen their mentor on a weekly basis (4 mentees). One did not see their mentor regularly and another saw the mentor fortnightly. Those who did not have weekly meetings were dissatisfied and wanted to change to weekly meetings. Few of those interviewed identified problems with their mentors except that they would have liked more frequent meetings; or as in the case of two mentees, their mentors had suddenly without explanation stopped contact:

> *"We were getting on but we had to rearrange the times – and he never contacted me again. He said he would phone and he didn't. That was the end of last year."*

When contacting mentees and mentors for the evaluation, it became clear that several mentoring relationships had ceased because the mentee or mentor had lost contact over the Christmas and New Year period, when the Social Support Officer was not available. This illustrated the need for, but also the challenges for the project, of continuously monitoring and supporting the development of the mentoring relationships. In all cases where there had been a problem identified, the Social Support Officer was trying to match the young person with another mentor.

Profile of Volunteer Mentors

The backbone of Matches was its body of volunteers, which it relied on to establish and maintain mentoring relationships with young people referred to the project. Over the lifetime of the project, 61 volunteers had been recruited and the drop-out rate had been 46%. As in the national research carried out for the Prince's Trust, the majority (66%) of volunteers were female and they ranged in age from 23 through to 60 years (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Age of volunteer mentors over the lifetime of Matches Project

Age band	Number	Percent
20-29 yrs	12	20
30-39 yrs	17	28
40-49 yrs	15	24
50 yrs+	7	11
Not known	10	16
TOTAL	**61**	**100***

(*does not sum 100 due to rounding)

While the majority (90%) of volunteers were described as being White UK, five were of Asian origin and one was White Irish. Of those for which there was information, three quarters of volunteer mentors were college or University educated, and some had a professional qualification in counselling. Where information was available, they typically came from a social science, psychology, community development, or counselling background, with a minority from business or industry.

Mentors who were interviewed commonly mentioned having counselling training or involvement in mentoring in schools through business and education partnerships. They had also been motivated to become involved in mentoring because of relevant life experiences. This included having coped with teenage problems in their own families or having direct experience of homelessness, alcohol or drug abuse and so on and importantly, they had turned their own lives around with support:

> *"I could feel empathy, I knew people who'd had hard times. I felt that what happened to me was bad, and I'd learnt that you can change things if you get the support."*

As can be seen from Table 6 below, few volunteers were actively in a mentoring relationship ('matched') with a young person at the time of the evaluation. However, a significant proportion of volunteers (24 or 40%) had been trained and were awaiting being matched with a young person. This included nine who had been trained and police checked, and a further 15 volunteers who had been trained but were awaiting the results of current police checks. Delays in processing police checks had arisen because the big step had to arrange checks through another agency as it was not registered with Disclosure Scotland.

Table 6: Status of mentors as at February 2003

Status Description	Number	Percent
Matched	2	3
Matched by Quarriers	2	3
Awaiting match	9	15
Matching	1	2
On hold	3	5
Awaiting police check	15	25
'De-selected'/dropped out of programme	28	46
Unknown	1	2
TOTAL	**61**	**100***

(*does not sum 100 due to rounding)

Mentors' views of mentoring

Training and support

As noted above all volunteer mentors were required to participate in a core training programme before being accepted as a volunteer and matched with a young person. From those interviewed, mentors' assessment of this training overall was highly positive. Comments ranged from "excellent" to it had been "good enough", that it was "very informative", "all good stuff" and "well structured". One mentor commented:

> *"It's kind of proved itself because at my initial meeting I was quite relaxed and calm. I thought I was going to be a bit nervous and I wasn't, I was fine, I was perfectly relaxed so I was really aware of what the situation was going to be you know."*

Other mentors felt that any training (no matter how good), could only ever prepare them so far for the reality. Variations in opinion about the training appeared to reflect the stage at which they had joined the project. Those who were most recently trained being the most positive, and those joining the project earlier being least positive. The training programme had been flexible and had changed in response to volunteers' comments and suggestions after each programme. The introduction of sessions involving practitioners as well as young people with experience of care were perceived as extremely beneficial, as was role-play in that it had provided the opportunity for mentors to test out possible responses to different situations.

Although some mentors had participated in follow-up training sessions or the Mentor Network Meetings, there was a perceived gap in meeting mentors' ongoing training and support needs:

> *"I would have liked more support from other mentors, those I trained with. More catch ups, sharing with other mentors what its like to deal with different situations, ask them 'how would you have dealt with this?'."* (Mentor)

> *"My one disappointment is they were going to bring us all together just to share a wee bit more, because you do work in isolation. I mean Beth is always there to phone and certainly I've used this a few times but it's more you know just like we're talking just now, that would have been really useful."* (Mentor in group interview)

There was limited top-up or new training after the core training programme. Despite there being opportunities for mentors to meet through the Mentor Network Meetings and to hear from specialist speakers, those interviewed identified a gap in terms of seeing and interacting with other mentors. The problem appeared to be that there were not enough opportunities for some mentors, or that they did not receive enough notice to schedule these meetings with their work and other commitments especially if working shift work:

> *"I was always working that day, so couldn't manage to get to them. I'm still kept in touch but it's only a couple of days notice for the meetings and because of shifts I can't make them."* (Mentor)

In contrast, the Social Support Officer reported having to cancel several Mentor Network Meetings because of insufficient numbers willing to meet. As this is at odds with the views expressed by the mentors in the research, it might merit further exploration of whether the problem lies with external factors such as shift work patterns and family commitments, or other factors such as the venue, time, focus of the meeting and so on.

Difference with befriending and advocacy

The difference between mentoring and other forms of social support especially befriending and advocacy, was an issue. So much so for one mentor that she had decided to become a volunteer with the befriending project instead. The mentor commented:

> *"I'd speak about my kids and she* (mentee) *said she'd like to go swimming. She'd have liked to get closer to me, my kids were near in age with her. It was a bit of distance that I didn't like with the mentoring and she felt that distance too."*

Others did not make such a clear-cut distinction between befriending and mentoring. What happened within mentoring relationships could be described as befriending at certain times, while at others it could be described as mentoring. The need "to juggle", or to combine and to "switch" between different roles and approaches within the mentoring relationship, was emphasised. The following extract from a group interview with three mentors illustrates this notion of a broader kind of relationships:

> *Mentor 1: I think I can actually <u>find the switch </u>between them.*

> *Mentor 2: You know because you hold sometimes the same conversation, you know if you're befriending someone or mentoring you can have the same conversation.*

> *Mentor 3: There was once or twice when I felt myself I was talking too much and that's you know when I suddenly remembered my purpose here and then <u>I had to switch</u>, you know to stop talking away here you know I better start listening.*

> *Mentor 1: To begin with it's sometimes it's like having teeth pulled or on a certain night it's like dragging teeth.*

> *Mentor 3: It's funny that feeling, there's <u>a kind of switch that goes on</u> I feel where I suddenly switched from being you know the listener and friend back to again here we are and …*

> *Mentor 1: And 'what are we going to do about it?' sort of thing.*

Some mentors mentioned finding it hard to adopt such an advisory role, one that only concentrated on discussing potential strategies with young people rather than directly helping them resolve practical problems they were experiencing.

One mentor experienced the role as challenging when they felt mentoring was not what the young person appeared to need:

> *"I think what she needed really was befriending, not mentoring. While the Matches project was about encouraging young people to be more independent, my role was about trying to encourage her in her education. It wasn't what I expected."*

In some instances therefore, what young people appeared to mentors to need more closely resembled that of a befriender than a mentor.

Other issues

Mentors expressed disappointment that mentees did not always turn up for arranged meetings, as one mentor commented:

> *"I certainly felt quite let down when the mentee didn't actually show up on two different occasions that were booked. I remember feeling quite disappointed, you know I'd waited about an hour and I bought a couple of really expensive coffees in one of the coffee bars you know and I just remember I had actually broken up my day from my own family to meet this young boy."*

While mentors accepted that this situation was likely to arise and that how they dealt with it could make all the difference to whether the young person stayed with the project. It was commented in the research that sharing this issue in a group with other mentors had been beneficial.

An issue identified by one mentor who had been waiting to be re-matched for some time, was that mentors in this position, sometimes felt abandoned and uninformed and that there should be better communication about when they were likely to be re-matched. It was suggested this might have an impact on maintaining a trained pool of volunteers.

Summary

Matches had successfully recruited 61 volunteer mentors and had had referrals in respect of 39 young people who were leaving or had left care. For a range of reasons, there had been relatively few matches to date (14 mentoring relationships) and currently, there were only two active mentoring relationships. Many young people referred had not made it to the induction interview, which suggests young people remain to be convinced of the benefits of the mentoring relationship.

Both the referring agent and the Social Support Officer had explained the role of a mentor to the mentees interviewed. Referrers had emphasised both the focus on setting goals and the befriending aspect of the mentor role. Young people recognised that they needed help with various aspects of independent living such as getting accommodation or a job, and they wanted mentors who could provide advice on a range of matters but would do so without being "in your face". They sought mentors who were "good listeners" and who would be "friendly, with knowledge".

Mentees' experience of the mentoring relationship so far was largely positive. They described their mentors as "quite good", "quite helpful" and said that it was "handy", "useful" or "worthwhile" to have a mentor. Problems had arisen when they did not see their mentor often enough and when either they or their mentor did not maintain the contact.

It was put forward that the current delays in processing police checks for volunteers might result in newly trained mentors losing interest and that the project might ultimately lose its investment in training them. This was a significant concern given the input of time and resources invested in training volunteers: fifteen potential mentors were currently awaiting the outcome of police checks.

Section 3 Recommendations

- **The volunteer training programme established should continue to expand on the inputs from practitioners and young people with experience of care**

- **The Social Support Officer should investigate what kind of support volunteer mentors want, especially how to ensure further opportunities for mutual support and sharing among volunteers, and why current arrangements do not meet this need**

- **The Steering Group in considering the future of Matches, should give proper consideration to establishing a more supportive organisational environment for the work to thrive and to be a better support for volunteer mentors**

- **Current methods for ongoing monitoring and maintenance of mentoring relationships should be reviewed**

- **The Steering Group should consider any new or additional ways to promote the benefits of mentoring to young people leaving care, perhaps drawing on the views and benefits identified by the young people taking part in this evaluation**

Section 4: Impact of Mentoring on Young People Leaving Care

Introduction

While the benefits would, as one key stakeholder suggested, be "individual and unique" to each young person, there were expectations, based on anecdotal evidence and previous research (Prince's Trust, 2002) that having a mentor would result in a range of benefits. These were that the young person would be less socially isolated; that they would find it easier to make the transition to independent living; they would have more self confidence; and that they would be better able to achieve personal goals, for instance, in relation to accommodation, education or employment.

Although those involved in setting up and managing Matches were convinced of the potential benefits of mentoring to young people leaving care, there was less known about young people's perspectives. In this Section the perceived impact of the mentoring relationships on young people are explored using information from interviews with a sample of mentees, as well as with mentors and key stakeholders.

Perceived benefits

The evaluation had "broadly aimed to review the outcomes" for individual young people, and to assess levels of satisfaction with the mentoring relationships. All but one of the mentees interviewed reported having gained from having a mentor. While they stated that having a mentor had been helpful, it had not in all cases led to achievements in all the areas targeted to work on with their mentor. Three mentees were 'satisfied' and one was 'very satisfied' that their mentor had helped them in some way. Two stated they were 'unsure' if their mentor had helped them. For five out of six mentees, their mentor was felt to be the kind of person they had asked for, and all six stated that their mentor usually or always saw their point of view.

A key finding was how difficult it was for young people to describe in concrete terms what difference having a mentor had meant to them. They spoke of how the mentor had helped them grow in self-confidence and sometimes that this had affected other areas of their lives positively. In some cases, the mentor had helped by reinforcing something the young person was doing already, for example, one young person stated:

> *"Well, I've stuck at Launch Pad – I've done all my modules. I was doing this before my mentor, but he gave me the confidence to try the harder stuff."* (Mentee)

More valuable to young people, was that the mentor had been "someone to talk to", a confidante to help them to, for instance:

"Get a lot of things off my chest that I kept in for a long time." (Mentee)

The one mentee who did not feel the mentor had helped them at all commented:

> *"She didn't help me do anything. All she did was take me to the park, that was it."* (Mentee)

While the mentoring relationship with this young person had lasted as long as 20 months, there was no record of any specific activities or personal goals having been identified by the young person with their mentor to provide a focus for the mentoring relationship other than "general recreation". It is therefore possible that this reflects an ambivalence over whether mentoring was the right approach with this individual.

Mentors commented that they sometimes found it difficult to assess the impact of mentoring when the relationship had been short:

> *"It's not knowing if you've been helpful to a young person who's at an age when they don't communicate with adults but not sure if you've influenced them in right way. Only later on you might know. I'd imagine if you've had a longer relationship you would feel you'd made more of a contribution."* (Mentor)

Further, given that the big step is not a service delivery organisation, the project is not involved in any other aspect of care provision and therefore is not automatically party to information about a young person once their mentoring relationship has ended. This has meant that on occasion there was little or no feedback from the project about a young person's whereabouts after the end of a relationship. While on one level mentors understood fully the practical and confidentiality issues surrounding this, the bond formed meant they had become personally involved and found it hard to let go:

> *"She was having problems with her boyfriend. It ended (mentoring relationship) because she was starting college, new life, she moved on basically. I was happy for her but I would have liked to hear what's happened and how she's getting on."* (Mentor)

Mentoring activities

The mentoring relationships for the young people interviewed ('mentees') had lasted between 3 to 22 months, with four out of the six mentees interviewed having a mentoring relationship lasting 12 months or more. During this time, mentees had worked with the help of their mentors on a variety of activities. Using a list of categories adapted from the York University survey (Prince's Trust, 2002) to better reflect the Matches project, young people were asked to identify which areas, if any, they had agreed to work on with their mentor. They were then asked to rate the amount of help they felt the mentor had given them in each of these areas on a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing 'didn't help at all' to 5, which represented 'helped a lot'. Table 7 below summarises the findings.

Table 7: Types of activities mentors had agreed to help with, and how helpful they had been

Description of Activity	Agreed with mentor	Rating 1 to 5*				
		1	2	3	4	5
1. Education/training	5	1	1	1	2	
2. Decision making	4			3	1	
3. Self-confidence	4			1	3	
4. Work/employment	4		1	1	1	1
5. Networks/friendships	3			2		1
6. Budgeting	3			2		1
7. Goal setting	3			1	1	1
8. Using other services	1		1			
9. Accommodation	1		1			
10. Leisure activities	1	1				

(*1=didn't help at all thru' to 5= helped a lot)

The mentees in this evaluation identified aspects of independent living skills, personal and inter-personal skills as being what they had worked on with their mentors. The focus of the relationships was less hobby or interest based than has been found by other research, for instance the Prince's Trust (2002). The main areas included education and training, followed by skills in decision-making and self-confidence, then work and employment, developing social networks, budgeting and goal setting. This focus supported the way some key stakeholders defined mentoring:

> "Enabling a young person to look forward instead of feeling they'll never have those opportunities because of what's happened in the past. It's about giving them the encouragement and confidence to be able to say 'Yes I'm as valuable as the next person'" (Key stakeholder)

While mentees identified that their mentors were helping them with aspects of self-confidence and to address problems with their social network and relationships, the strongest orientation within these relationships was towards setting goals, however low key. This was right from the start of the mentoring relationship with Matches' volunteers.

However, having identified goals and objectives, the question is how successful were mentors in helping mentees achieve them? The distribution of scores shown in Table 7 above indicates diverse experiences in achieving expectations within the mentoring relationship. Overall, it could be concluded that mentors were helping young people with a range of areas and that there clearly were positive achievements, though not for all mentees.

The cluster of scores under the mid-point on the scale for several areas again illustrates how difficult it was for young people to evaluate the impact of mentoring for them. What the table shows is that mentees considered mentors helped them most with self-confidence and second, with supporting their education and training goals. For a minority, their mentor had helped significantly (scores of 5) with

achieving work or employment goals, supporting relationships, with budgeting and with goal setting.

The main ways that mentors had helped mentees achieve their goals was through adopting a flexible approach and by helping them draw up action plans. For example, mentees commented:

> *"He would talk about what I wanted. The other workers were only caring about their own bit and they won't talk about anything else." (Mentee)*

> *"She draws up an action plan on things that I've to do and things that she is to do. We agree on things in the plan. She does this every week and phones to see how I'm doing." (Mentee)*

Mentors thus made a difference, in the words of one mentee, "just by talking" and by providing the space for a young person to talk about what they wanted, as well as actively listening and helping them turn their vision into reality. Mentees stated they felt "comfortable" with their mentor, and that they sometimes had interests in common with them. The mentor "took time" and was invariably "a good listener".

Mentors also identified qualities of the relationship as making the difference to young people:

> *"I was the only person she'd speak to when I'd go up there and she'd locked herself in her room. They don't tell us the person's personal background, we're not there to question them on that and they tell us what they want to. What I did was to encourage her to go to college, it was about convincing her that anything she wanted to do she could do if she believed in herself." (Mentor)*

Other aspects of the relationship mentors identified as making a difference were that as a volunteer, they were not paid to be with the young person and that this showed "you come because you want to help them", that the volunteer mentor was "there one hundred percent" for the young person.

Impact on Social Support

Key stakeholders had suggested that mentors would help young people achieve a "decreased sense of social isolation", and enable young people to make better use of their existing social networks of support. Second, they suggested that mentors would help young people increase their uptake of leisure facilities in their own communities:

> *"It's about supporting young people to expand and sometimes develop from scratch their social networks. Mentors should be trying to make themselves obsolete through building relationship, getting to know the young person's networks." (Key stakeholder)*

This was particularly important where the young person was moving into a place they were unfamiliar with. Additionally, mentors could potentially help young people become aware of where and how to get the support they needed:

> "To make better use of the services available to them and that they're entitled to. To enforce their right to make use of and ask for these services and to do that in a constructive way." (Key stakeholder)

The quality of the relationship with the mentor was the key social support provided through Matches. Two mentees identified their mentor as someone other than family or friends that they would confide in if they felt worried or isolated. However, as the following quotation shows, although the relationship with mentors was a highly valued social support in itself, having a mentor involved did not necessarily serve to widen the young person's social circle or network as anticipated:

> "Everything with her was great. She was nice but it didn't help with my social problems. When I went back to my own flat I went back to my old ways." (Mentee)

This was reflected in what mentors said about the impact they felt they had had in this area, for instance:

> "We joined the Sports Centre. I suggested she met up with people at the Centre but she never felt comfortable with me not being there." (Mentor)

From the mentees' perspective, mentors appeared to have least direct impact on their social support and networks. For instance, even though the majority considered themselves to have just one or more close friends, only one stated the mentor had helped her to use other services such as Careers Services, Positive Futures, or had helped them to meet new people. Using new services or places in the community did not in fact appear high on young people's agenda, as this comment from one mentee illustrates:

> "She did encourage me to go places but I never got around to it." (Mentee)

Similarly, this mentor commented:

> "I don't think she was the slightest bit interested in me linking her with others her own age." (Mentor)

It was not possible in this evaluation to measure indirect benefits of having a mentor on social networks and support because of the young person becoming more self-confident. However, both mentees and mentors were able to identify how they had benefited in terms of confidence and that this helped with relating to other people in ordinary social situations. Also, as mentors in the group interview observed, helping a mentee to get a job was going to be "life changing" and an experience that will invariably have potential for extending relationships and social support.

Impact on Independent Living

Through practical assistance, key stakeholders believed that mentoring would ensure that young people leaving care would be "better equipped when or if they move on." Having a mentor it was believed, would make a difference to young people's skills in daily living, such as with budgeting, shopping, managing a home, coping on welfare benefits and so on.

Only two mentees felt it had helped with independent living: for one person it had increased their self-confidence and sense of independence and for another, it had reduced his dependency on paid professionals:

> "It made me realise that I don't always need to see these people, I mean psychologists, social workers and that kind of stuff." (Mentee)

From the mentees' perspective, the mentoring relationship did not appear to have helped them directly with the experience of leaving care. This was mainly because three had already left care at the point they were introduced to their mentor and were either already "settled in my own flat" or had left care up to two years previous. Nevertheless, it can be seen from the table above that independent living skills (e.g. budgeting) and activities related to maintaining independence (particularly education/training and work/employment), were what young people had chosen to focus on in the mentoring relationship. Further, some mentees identified significant gains in these areas.

Impact on Self-Confidence

It is commonly assumed that having a mentor will help build a young person's self-confidence and more generally, that it will help them to develop a more mature approach:

> "To handle life situations in a constructive and confident way, to learn to use emotions constructively not destructively." (Key stakeholder)

This assumption was strongly supported by the findings of the evaluation. In fact, helping young people gain in self-confidence was an area in which mentors were felt to be having a significant impact. Four out of six mentees felt their mentor had had an effect on their self-confidence. One felt it had not made any difference and another that they had less self-confidence but did not elaborate on why they had less self-confidence because of the mentoring relationship.

Increased self-confidence translated into being better able to express what they wanted to others and to take more control over their lives. In the following quotation from one mentee, it can be seen how becoming gradually more confident about confiding in and learning to trust the mentor, had an overall impact on their ability to relate to other people:

> *"Every time I talk to him about my past I feel better about telling him more. I have more confidence to go out and meet and talk to people and not be afraid to say something." (Mentee)*

In four out of six cases, mentees felt their mentor had made a positive difference to how they felt about themselves. This was in terms of raising their expectations and self-value:

> *"Just the way I look upon myself and how much I feel I'm worth something. Made me believe in myself I suppose." (Mentee)*

> *"My mentor talked to me as if I was somebody. When somebody does that it makes you think that maybe you are." (Mentee)*

For two mentees however, having a mentor did not seem to them to have made any difference to how they felt about themselves. One stated it had made no difference and the other that:

> *"Although we talked I didn't feel I had the strength mentally to do some of the things she said. She tried to get me to see I didn't need my abusive boyfriend but it's hard." (Mentee)*

This latter comment emphasises how mentors were only one part of the support system needed to support young people who had left care and cannot substitute for professional support to address complex and difficult issues. What this mentee had recognised however, was that more intensive support from the mentor might have helped. She felt that had she been able to see the mentor on a weekly rather than fortnightly basis as preferred, it might have made all the difference.

Summary

The majority of young people interviewed felt they had gained something from the mentoring relationship but they could not always describe this in very concrete terms. In the one case where the young person did not feel that mentoring had made any difference, it was noted that no activities or goals had been agreed between the young person and mentor as a focus for the relationship and this suggested ambivalence over whether mentoring was the right approach.

The findings show that mentors were helping young people most with independent living skills and personal and inter-personal skills such as developing self-confidence and, to a lesser extent, goal setting. Mentors had been successful in helping young people with a range of activities, but there were variations across the relationships. The two key areas of greatest impact were in relation to increasing young people's self-confidence and helping with education and training goals. Some individuals had made significant gains with work and employment goals, their relationships, with budgeting and with goal setting.

Most valued by mentees was the quality of the personal relationship they had with their mentors who they considered as "good listeners" and people whom they felt "comfortable" with. Mentors similarly felt that what made the difference to young

people was that as unpaid volunteers, they were there "one hundred per cent" for the young person. The findings also show that Matches had successfully recruited and trained high quality volunteers and that these volunteers were its key asset in achieving its aims.

The area where mentors appeared to be having least direct impact was in relation to improving social networks and use of community facilities. However, it was acknowledged by mentees that general improvements in self-confidence did have an indirect impact on social interaction, although this was difficult to measure.

Section 4 Recommendations

- **The Steering Group together with the Social Support Officer should consider how to strengthen the processes of review and evaluation used by mentees and mentors within relationships and by the project across relationships. In this way, the project should be better able to identify the gains and achievements of the mentoring relationships on an ongoing basis**

- **Mentors should be encouraged to regularly record what has been achieved in respect of the areas of activity agreed with the mentee, including any stories that illustrate (with permission of mentee)**

- **The partner agencies should consider whether there are other approaches that might better address the social isolation of young people leaving care**

- **Consideration be given to including modules on community connecting and capacity building in the training of mentors to enhance their skills in enhancing young people's social support networks**

- **The partner agencies should consider how Matches could better integrate with Leaving Care Services in providing support to young people making the transition to independence**

Section 5: Ideas for Improvements

Introduction

In this final Section of findings from the evaluation, the viewpoints of mentees, mentors and key stakeholders are used to explore the ways Matches might change to become more effective. It addresses a key objective of the evaluation, which was to make recommendations for the ongoing development of the project with specific reference to joining with Quarriers Befriending Project.

A strong case for a continuing role

The majority of research participants (mentees, mentors, and key stakeholders) envisaged that Matches should continue to exist in some form, and that it should expand its reach to more young people. Key stakeholders were concerned about how the project would be funded and sustained in the longer term but there was confidence that the firm foundations developed over the past two years could be built upon and indeed, that they should not be lost.

The future lay in "the uniqueness of the relationships" built up with young people through Matches and which has been evidenced throughout this report. There was felt to be a definite future role for mentors to act as "honest brokers" for young people leaving care, as well as a need to continue to support those young people that currently had mentors. As one mentor put it:

> "Every child leaving care should have someone they can speak to, explain their options." (Mentor)

Although it had been difficult for young people to define in tangible terms what they had gained from the relationship with their mentor, all but one mentee considered having a mentor as beneficial to young people leaving care. Five out six would recommend Matches to other young people leaving care on the grounds that:

> "Just to help your confidence. Everyone needs someone to talk to. Someone other than your family." (Mentee)

Four main themes emerged in respect of how Matches might develop in the future: one was the need to concentrate on increasing the number of matches so that the project reached more young people and was able to make more of a difference; second, improving communication & support to mentors; third, being clear about what mentoring is and how this was different than other forms of social support; and lastly, the development of more responsive and holistic services.

Increasing mentoring relationships

Some of those interviewed expressed concern over the low number of matches the project had achieved over two years:

"I do rate the project and think it's positive and worthwhile but wish it could be rolled out more. The issue has always been that the energy and effort hasn't always been reflected in the number of matches. It was expected there'd be more people through the project. There are lots of good reasons why this hasn't happened such as the time from referral to actual match – lots of young people lose interest and drift." (Key stakeholder)

Although not seeking a "quick fix", they felt the key issue was how to increase the volume of matches. Key stakeholders wanted to explore whether there were ways to reduce the time gap between referral and matching with a mentor, and the time from induction training to making a match. Delays in obtaining police checks for volunteer mentors has already been mentioned as a cause for concern:

"If there's a long period of time where you're not matched up I think it can affect the mentor. I know for instance that people have done the training and have not being matched up and we understand the problems of matching, but I can see people feeling that they're just not being a part of it, just kind of maybe possibly lost a fantastic mentor." (Mentor)

It was speculated that to achieve higher numbers of matches might require an expanded team dedicated to providing a mentoring service. Mentors and mentees needed safeguards and support and this was time intensive. The proposed merger with Quarriers befriending project was considered to have potential for achieving a firmer footing for the mentoring relationships.

Improving communication & support

It was thought communication and support particularly to mentors could be improved. First in terms of the Steering Group, it was proposed the representative nature of the Steering Group could be improved as, although on paper the group was representative, not all agencies attended meetings. There was a gap in terms of housing and homelessness interests. A minority of stakeholders had also proposed further consideration be given to how mentees and mentors could be involved in the Steering Group, although these comments did not acknowledge what had happened to date in involving young people through the Health Reference Group and the planned discussion with young people from this Group about the appropriateness of the mentoring model.

Throughout this report, comments have been reported from mentors and key stakeholders about the way volunteer mentors were supported by the project and how they would like to improve this. Where the project is located in the future seems fundamental to addressing this issue. The current management of the project through the big step was suggested to be limiting the extent to which Matches could promote "camaraderie" among volunteers:

"As a volunteer in other organisations I've had a sense of being part of something, a sense of belonging. We've not been able to foster that. As a volunteer, I could go at any time to a big room set aside for volunteers and you could meet other volunteers, access a phone, storage, filing cabinet. In big step that's really lacking and I wonder whether that's contributed to

volunteers drifting away. Volunteers perhaps don't feel same sense of responsibility." (Key stakeholder)

Locating the project within an existing service provider such as Quarriers and relocating to more suitable premises could alleviate the present concerns of volunteers and help to increase their sense of identity within the project. As a non-service provider, the big step could not operate in a way that optimised contact and support either for young people or volunteer mentors. Not being a service provider had also meant the big step was not registered with Disclosure Scotland and had to process the police checks through another agency.

Mentors had identified the need for information about "the bigger picture", and for more interaction and information to flow from the project. One mentor commented that he had to push to get some of the information he wanted and that this was not as forthcoming as he would have liked. Mentors sometimes felt "in the dark" when waiting to be re-matched for instance. They also sought additional opportunities to the Mentors Network Meetings for mutual support and would welcome ongoing training opportunities, particularly when in-between matches and there was no other contact with the project.

Clarity about what mentoring is

There were two particular schools of thought to emerge from the evaluation. One was that in the future, there should be greater clarity about mentoring and its difference with befriending and other forms of social support. Those who advocated this approach felt it important for services to be distinct and to actively signpost to other services in order to meet young people's needs appropriately:

> *"I wouldn't want to muddy the waters of what the mentors project is. Think you should separate the two (referring to befriending and mentoring)." (Key stakeholder)*

In this vision, there was a clear role for a separate mentoring project as that provided through Matches at present, but one that would spend even more time ensuring that the young people who accessed the service, their referrers and volunteer mentors had a better understanding of the nature of the mentoring relationships and how this related to other forms of social support.

In the opinion of mentors and key stakeholders, a minority of those who had accessed Matches might have been better served by befriending or buddying services. When asked whether a mentor was what they needed at the time, five out of six mentees felt sure that it was. However, some of their responses left a question mark over whether this was indeed the only approach to their needs, for instance they stated:

> *"I needed something in my life. Something to do and someone to talk to with similar interests to have a laugh." (Mentee)*

> *"It wasn't a mentor I needed, it was a support worker who I could see weekly to help me budget. I was bad at this when I left care." (Mentee)*

Similarly, one mentor had found the role was not as she had expected:

> *"Perhaps in the future should find out more about what the young person wants from the programme. I thought it was more about independent living than it was, money management, housekeeping, independent living that sort of thing." (Mentor)*

One stop shop holistic support

In contrast, the second school of thought was that services could become more responsive and flexible at meeting young people's needs through a generic service or 'one stop shop'. Rather than creating separate services and referring young people to distinct supports offering befriending, mentoring, advocacy or careers advice, a one stop shop would have professionals (and volunteers) able to respond flexibly and to work out in a more person-centred way what might suit the young person. One advantage would be that support could change if the young person's needs changed.

To some, this was preferable to 'signposting' onto other services. It was argued that at present, young people were asked to "go through hoops" because the system of projects and services separated out different types of support and allocated these on the basis of set criteria and exclusions. The one stop shop idea was different:

> *"In my mind it's about trying to create a menu of options and choices within the same service. One of the advantages of that would be a common point to assess young person's needs and where other organisations were able to refer young people. Would make more sense to be one stop project, where they've sustainability and security" (Key stakeholder)*

> *"Young people should expect to be received and link a person to them who is trained to know what befriending is about, what mentoring is, be knowledgeable about careers advice, etc" (Key stakeholder)*

This approach was based on the belief that mentoring only meets the needs of a minority of young people leaving care, and that they have other needs requiring different responses. The drawbacks identified were that the multi-agency partnership approach that had been successful in managing Matches might be lost and that the pool of people volunteering to be mentors might run dry.

Summary

The views expressed through this evaluation supported a continuing role for mentoring partnerships with young people leaving care. Having a mentor was perceived as a right because "everyone needs someone to talk to". The future lay in the so-called uniqueness of the relationships built up through Matches and there was a definite future role for mentors as "honest brokers".

Participants' ideas for the future fell into four main themes. First, there was a need to widen the scope of the project to a greater number of young people. While there were understood to be good reasons why the number of matches so far had been just 14, it was thought with a dedicated staff team recruiting, training and supporting volunteers, more young people could benefit from the approach.

Second, there were a number of ideas as to how to improve communication within the project especially between the project and volunteers. The Steering Group had been supportive of Matches but had specific gaps and shortcomings that needed to be addressed if the project was to be properly supported to move forward. Placing the project within a service provider and ensuring opportunities for mentors to get together to provide mutual support and learning could improve the way volunteer mentors are supported.

While some key stakeholders saw the future in terms of ensuring greater clarity around the mentoring role and its relationship to befriending, others promoted the development of a one stop shop offering a range of services under the one service umbrella. The latter was thought to be more young person friendly and would avoid asking young people to "go through hoops" before the 'right' service was identified for them.

The benefits of the one stop shop were that it would be able to offer a menu of options and choices within the same service and there would be a common assessment point. It was put that this had a greater chance of being sustainable as it was potentially more cost effective. It was also thought feasible that this could be achieved through the proposed merger of Matches with Quarriers Befriending Service.

Section 5 recommendations

- **The reasons for the low numbers of matches should be analysed systematically to help identify the barriers and potential solutions to widening access to mentoring relationships. If the main issue is one of resources, this should be taken into account in future plans**

- **The big step and Quarriers need to consider the needs of volunteers for support in redesigning future services, including the need to foster camaraderie and mutual support among volunteers**

- **The findings of this evaluation should be disseminated widely among all those involved in the project including young people**

- **The need for administrative support to meet some of the support needs of mentors and mentees should be considered**

- **There needs to be an urgent discussion of the pros and cons of providing distinct or holistic services in the future within the Steering Group, particularly in light of plans to merge with Quarriers Befriending Project.**

Section 6: Discussion

This final Section draws together the key findings and observations made in the report. It is followed by a list of key recommendations emerging from the research. Some of the key findings from the evaluation of the Matches Project were:

- Over two years Matches had recruited 61 volunteer mentors thus exceeding its target input of 50 volunteers

- It had not reached its target output of 35 mentoring relationships. Only 14 young people out of 39 potential referrals had been matched with a mentor

- Few young homeless people had benefited from a mentoring relationship and there were differing views about whether mentoring was an appropriate approach given their unsettled lifestyles

- A considerable proportion (40%) of volunteer mentors had been trained and were waiting to be matched with a young person, although the majority of them were awaiting a police check

- Reports about the recruitment, training and support of volunteer mentors were generally positive but mentors sought additional opportunities to meet informally with other mentors

- Having a mentor was described as "quite good", "quite helpful", "handy", "useful" and "worthwhile"

- There was an overall sense of gain from having a mentor and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, but this was not because it had necessarily led to significant achievements

- The main activities mentors were engaged in helping young people with were independent living and personal and interpersonal skills

- Young people valued mentors most because they boosted their self-confidence and self belief, increasing the feeling that "I'm worth something"

- Mentors were having little impact on social support and networks according to both mentees and mentors

- Four key areas for improvement were proposed: increasing the number of matches and reach of the project; improving communication and support in the project; refining the mentoring service further or developing a 'one stop shop' service to be more responsive to young people's needs.

The picture to emerge from this evaluation is complex. On the one hand, Matches had successfully provided a high quality mentoring service to young people leaving care during its two years. The evaluation found high levels of satisfaction among young people, volunteer mentors and key stakeholders with what the project was doing and how it was doing it. Overall, young people and mentors were satisfied

with the matches made and the relationships formed were highly valued by young people. On the other, it had fallen short of its target output of 35 mentoring relationships by 60% and to some key stakeholders, the effort and investment seemed disproportionate to the output.

The management of Matches falling under the big step Social Inclusion Partnership created a number of constraints or disadvantages for the project that were acknowledged. Its location constrained Matches' ability to provide the support clearly needed both by young people and volunteer mentors. For example, the problem that had arisen with SCRO police checks and was causing a logjam of ready and trained volunteers, had come about because the big step was not a service provider and therefore had not registered under the new Disclosure Scotland.

There were perceived gains from the mentoring relationships both from the perspectives of young people and volunteers. However, these were not always tangible to young people or mentors. It is therefore imperative that such a project considers how else information about the impact and outcomes (short and long term) might best be captured on an ongoing basis.

The quality of the relationships was clear from young people's comments and the perceived impact on self-esteem and self-confidence was considerable. Of significance to young people with experience of care was that the mentor was someone in their lives who talked to them "as if I was somebody". In helping to raise young people's aspirations and foster a more positive approach, mentors could conceivably be having far reaching impact on young people's quality of life and their future, although this will be challenging to measure.

Whether Matches should continue as a separate distinct service, albeit managed by a different agency, or if what has been learnt about setting up and supporting a mentoring service should be incorporated into the development of a 'one-stop-shop' service, remains in question at the end of the evaluation. There appeared to be particularly strong argument for developing a more holistic, flexible service not least because the mentoring approach was clearly not suited to all young people leaving care and because at different points in their lives, young people will need different approaches. Arguably, a one stop shop would cut down the number of agencies that young people had to approach to have their needs met and could be more cost effective.

This evaluation did not set out to explore specific options beyond a general consideration of the proposal to link with Quarriers Befriending Service. It is however clear, that the current placement in the big step needs to change and the proposed merge with Quarriers offers much potential as an agency knowledgeable about befriending as well as the needs of young people (including young homeless people).

Whatever is decided, it will be important to ensure that a future project builds upon the firm foundations already established in terms of operational systems and good practice, and to ensure that those young people involved in current and future mentoring relationships, continue to benefit. In setting up any new project or service, it will also be essential to acknowledge the importance of skilled and committed coordination and leadership as provided by the Social Support Officer within the big step for Matches.

Section 7:   Key Recommendations

The purpose of this evaluation had been to examine the project from a range of perspectives and to make recommendation for its future development. The following recommendations therefore have been proposed to help the commissioners of the evaluation consider ways forward.

1. The partnership should explore how current management structures can be strengthened so that they provide more effective support to the Social Support Officer/project coordinator

2. The Social Support Officer in discussion with the Steering Group should explore the implications for service delivery and approach if the service is to meet the needs of young homeless people

3. The Steering Group should discuss how the project can build upon the consultation work undertaken with young people through the big step Health Reference Group and how mentors could participate in the Steering Group

4. The volunteer training programme established should continue to expand on the inputs from practitioners and young people with experience of care

5. The Social Support Officer should investigate what kind of support volunteer mentors want, especially how to ensure further opportunities for mutual support and sharing among volunteers, and why current arrangements do not meet this need

6. The Steering Group in considering the future of Matches, should give proper consideration to establishing a more supportive organisational environment for the work to thrive and to be a better support for volunteer mentors

7. Current methods for ongoing monitoring and maintenance of mentoring relationships should be reviewed

8. The Steering Group should consider any new or additional ways to promote the benefits of mentoring to young people leaving care, perhaps drawing on the views and benefits identified by the young people taking part in this evaluation

9. The Steering Group together with the Social Support Officer should consider how to strengthen the processes of review and evaluation used by mentees and mentors within relationships and by the project across relationships. In this way, the project should be better able to identify the gains and achievements of the mentoring relationships on an ongoing basis

10. Mentors should be encouraged to regularly record what has been achieved in respect of the areas of activity agreed with the mentee, including any stories that illustrate (with permission of mentee)

11. The partner agencies should consider whether there are other approaches that might better address the social isolation of young people leaving care

12. Consideration be given to including modules on community connecting and capacity building in the training of mentors to enhance their skills in enhancing young people's social support networks

13. The partner agencies should consider how Matches could better integrate with Leaving Care Services in providing support to young people making the transition to independence

14. The reasons for the low numbers of matches should be analysed systematically to help identify the barriers and potential solutions to widening access to mentoring relationships. If the main issue is one of resources, this should be taken into account in future plans

15. The big step and Quarriers need to consider the needs of volunteers for support in redesigning future services, including the need to foster camaraderie and mutual support among volunteers

16. The findings of this evaluation should be disseminated widely among all those involved in the project including young people

17. The need for administrative support to meet some of the support needs of mentors and mentees should be considered

18. There needs to be an urgent discussion of the pros and cons of providing distinct or holistic services in the future within the Steering Group, particularly in light of plans to merge with Quarriers Befriending Project.

Section 8:   References

Dixon, J, Stein, M. (2002), *Still A Bairn? Throughcare and Aftercare Services in Scotland,* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

The big step (2003), *Project Update,* Matches Mentoring Project.

The Prince's Trust Leaving Care Initiative, (2002), *Review 1998-2002.*

Matches Mentoring Project Training Pack

Appendices: Research Measures

Evaluation of the Matches Mentoring Project 2003

Mentees interview schedule

Date of interview:

Interviewees' Initials:

Cover Sheet - To be completed before interview:

Mentees' initials: …………………………. **Gender**:   female ☐   male ☐

Mentee's Age: ………………

Where living now:

with parents	☐
with partner	☐
with friends	☐
with foster carers	☐
in a hostel	☐
in independent living accommodation	☐
with other relatives	☐
nowhere settled	☐
other	☐
(please write where) _____	

Length of time they've had mentor: ……………………

Do they currently have a mentor?   Yes ☐   No ☐

Areas/Personal Goals Recorded:

<u>Expectations</u>

First, I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you came to have a mentor and what you thought it'd be like.

1. Can you remember who put you in touch with the Matches Mentoring Project? Was it your social worker, residential keyworker, outreach worker, someone else?

2. Did he/she explain what having a mentor would be like?........   Yes ☐ No ☐

3. Did someone from the Matches project (e.g. Beth) explain it to you?

       ....   Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Why did you want a mentor? What did you hope to gain?

5. What qualities were you looking for in a 'good' mentor?

<u>Experience</u>

I'd now like to ask you a few things about your experience of having a mentor.

6. What's it like to have a mentor? What words come to mind? (Can be single words, not necessarily description)

7. Do/did you and your mentor agree on areas he/she'd help you with? I'm going to show you a list and want you say which you agreed to (*tick all that apply*)

    ☐ Budgeting
    ☐ Using other services
    ☐ Accommodation/finding somewhere to live
    ☐ Leisure activities
    ☐ Decision-making
    ☐ Self-confidence
    ☐ Work/employment
    ☐ Education/training
    ☐ Networks/friendships
    ☐ Goal setting
    ☐ Other (please say what)

8. Do/did you see your mentor REGULARLY? *(Read down the options and tick ONE)*

<div style="text-align:right">

Don't see him/her <u>regularly</u> . ☐

Every week .... ☐

Fortnightly .... ☐

Monthly   .... ☐

Less often .... ☐

</div>

9. Have you had any problems with your mentor? Yes ☐ No ☐: If YES, what kind of problems?

10. What happened? Has the problem been sorted out? How?

11. If you've had problems, were you comfortable in speaking to your mentor about it? Yes ☐ No ☐: If NO, why not?

12. Did you feel comfortable in speaking to anyone else about the problem? *(eg Beth at the big step, your worker etc)*

<u>Satisfaction</u>

13. Is/was your mentor the kind of person you asked for? (eg male/female; the right age; outgoing/quiet etc) ....Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Do/did you see your mentor as often as you would like? Yes ☐ No ☐: If NO, what would be better?

15. Do/did you feel that your mentor understands things from your point of view?
☐ He/she <u>always</u> sees my point of view
☐ He/she <u>usually</u> sees my point of view
☐ Don't know/not sure
☐ He/she <u>rarely</u> sees my point of view
☐ He/she <u>never</u> sees my point of view
Comments?

16. Is/was your mentor someone you feel/felt you can easily talk to?
Yes ☐ No ☐ *(Ask to explain their answer)*

17. How satisfied are you that the mentor has helped you? Are you……..
     (Show options and tick ONE))

<div style="text-align:center">

Very satisfied…………………………………… ☐

Satisfied   …………………………………… ☐

Not sure   …………………………………… ☐

Dissatisfied…………………………………… ☐

Very dissatisfied …………………………… ☐

</div>

Impact/Outcomes

I'd now like to find out whether you feel you've benefited or not from having a mentor

18. What have you gained, if anything, from having a mentor?

19. Has your mentor helped you to cope better with leaving care?

Yes ☐ No ☐   If YES, how did he/she help you?

20. I'd like to find out what your mentor has helped you with most. I'm going to show you a list of things your mentor might help you with and I want you to say how helpful he/she has been:

(Use scale: 1. didn't help at all; 2. hardly any help; 3 don't know; 4 helped a bit; 5 helped a lot – show card)

	Didn't help at all…………………………	Helped a lot
Budgeting	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Using other services	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Finding somewhere to live	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Leisure activities	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Decision-making	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Self-confidence	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Work/employment	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Education/training	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Networks/friendships	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Goal setting	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	
Other (please say what)	1----------2----------3----------4----------5	

………

………

21. How did he/she help you with these?

22. Is there anything else I've not mentioned that you would have liked help with?

23. Has your mentor made a positive difference to how you feel about yourself?

Yes ☐ No☐   If YES, in what way(s)?

24. Has your mentor had any effect on your self-confidence?

☐ *Increased my self-confidence*
☐ *I've less self-confidence*
☐ *Hasn't made any difference*

Can you give me any examples?

25. Thinking now about your friends - Do you consider yourself to have……………
(Tick ONE)

One or more close friends   ☐
Some friends but no-one close   ☐
No real friends   ☐

26. If you ever felt sad, lonely or worried, is there anyone special you know you could talk to? Yes☐   No   ☐

Is this person a……………   (Tick ALL that apply)

Friend   ☐
Family/relative   ☐
Social worker   ☐
Mentor   ☐
Resource worker   ☐
Other   ☐

27. Has your mentor helped you to use new places or services such as swimming pools, clubs, young people's services (Positive Futures, The Place) etc?
Yes ☐ No ☐ How did he/she help you?

28. Did you make any new friends at these places? Yes ☐ No☐

29. Has having a mentor helped you in any way to meet new people?
Yes ☐ No ☐ If YES, how did he/she do that?

__Improving__

30. Looking back, was a mentor what you needed at the time? Yes ☐ No☐
If Yes or No, ask, can you say more?

31. Is there any other kind of support that would have been better for you?

32. Do you have any other comments about how mentoring could help you better?

33. Finally, if you knew someone who's facing leaving care, would you suggest them getting a mentor?   ....Yes ☐   No ☐
(Ask to explain answer)

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

THANK YOU FOR SPARING THE TIME TO TALK TO ME TODAY

(Remember £10 gift voucher and travel expenses)

JR
25/02/03

Evaluation of Matches Mentoring Project for the big step
Mentor Interview Schedule (February 2003)

Background to becoming a mentor

1. *How did you first hear about the Matches Project? (newspaper advert; from a talk/presentation; through someone else etc)*
2. *What motivated or inspired you to become a mentor?*
3. *What kinds of skills and experience do/did you have to offer the project?*

What it's like to be a mentor

4. *Are you currently matched with a young care leaver? If not, are you considering being re-matched?*
5. *Can you tell me something about what it's like to be a mentor?*
6. *What are the good and bad things about being a mentor? Why?*

Recruitment, training and support of mentors

7. *What did you think of the recruitment and selection process for becoming a mentor with the Matches project? (application form, training, Police Checks, references, review interview)*
8. *Did you attend the training sessions? Did this training provide you with the skills and knowledge you needed to be a mentor? If no, what would have helped you?*
9. *What kind of support do you/did you get as a mentor?*
10. *Do you attend the mentor network meetings? Are these helpful to you?*
11. *In your view, do you have enough contact with the project?*

Satisfaction with the 'match'

12. *How happy are/were you with the match between you and the young person you support/supported? Why is it good/bad?*
13. *Did this match reflect what you had said about your preferences? (where you're prepared to travel to, what issues you'd rather not work with etc.)*
14. *If the mentor relationship has ended – Why do you think the mentor relationship ended?*

Impact

Impact mentors have or hope to have on the young person's life

15. *What difference do you feel mentoring makes/or will make to young care leavers moving to independent accommodation? (E.g. in terms of young person's skills, outlook, social network, confidence etc)*
16. *How do you help support a young care leaver to improve their social contact and support?*
17. *How do you help support them to develop the social skills they'll need to make a success of independent living in the longer term?*
18. *Can you give me any examples of how you've helped reduce social isolation for a young care leaver?*
19. *Will this help them in the future as far as you can tell?*

Problems/issues

20. *Has being a mentor caused any problems or issues for you? What kind of issues/problems? (E.g. issues around the difference with befriending role; dependency; expectations etc)*
21. *Endings – if the mentor relationship has ended, was it a planned ending or unplanned? What happened and how did you feel?*

Improvements

22. *How could the project learn from your experience?*
23. *Should the project be doing anything differently in the future? What?*

Any other comments

24. *Is there anything else you'd wish to say about the project or about this evaluation?*

JR
09/02/03

Evaluation of Matches Mentoring Project for the big step
Key Stakeholder Interview February 2003

1. What's your relationship to the Matches project? Please outline your involvement in developing, supporting, managing, or running the project.

2. As a member of the Steering Group, how well do you feel the Steering Group supports the project?

3. What's your understanding and view of the aims and objectives of the Matches project?

4. Have the aims and objectives altered in any way over the life of the project? *If so, was this appropriate?*

5. Is there anything the project isn't doing but you think it could or should be?

6. From what you know of the project, what seems to have worked well and what hasn't worked so well?

7. What difference do you feel the project makes or will make to young people who are moving to independent accommodation?

8. What difference is or will the project make to young people who've been in care and are now homeless?

9. What do you feel are the limitations of the project and why?

10. Are there any factors or constraints that either currently inhibits the project from achieving its aims, or of developing in the future?

11. Are there any factors that you think contribute to its success? *(e.g. strong inter-agency links; calibre of the mentors etc)*

12. What are your hope and aspirations for the project? How would you like to see it develop?

13. Do you have any concerns for the project now or in the future?

14. Is there anything else you'd wish to say about the project, or about this evaluation?

3 February 2003