



# Future Me Mentoring

# Evaluation Report 2020

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### Introduction

Future First works across the UK to help build, engage and activate thriving state school alumni networks, to ensure that all young people have access to relatable role models, trusted mentors and meaningful social capital.

In 2019/20 Future First received funding from Nick Strong to design and pilot an alumni mentoring programme, supporting Year 12 students to prepare for their next steps after school. 36 students based in two schools with a high proportion of students in receipt of free school meals participated in a series of two-hour mentoring sessions. All students were asked to complete baseline and exit surveys to measure their progress over the duration of the programme. This report summarises the key evaluation findings incorporating feedback from volunteer mentors.

### Project Overview

Future Me Mentoring took place in two schools based in London and the West Midlands:

School	% Free school meals	Number of mentees	Number of mentors
Sydney Russell School	37%	21	13
Ormiston Forge Academy	43%	15	6

Over six weeks, Year 12 students participated in three fortnightly mentoring sessions. 80% of the mentors who participated in the programme were former students of The Sydney Russell School and Ormiston Forge Academy and 20% were former students from schools in the local area.

In advance of the initial session students completed a matching form, providing us with information about their career/education aspirations, their hobbies and interests as well as their favourite subjects at school. This information was then used to match them with mentors who had similar interests and/or had jobs in industries that students had registered an interest in.

Each mentor was matched with between one and three students and all mentoring sessions took place in school. The sessions were designed and facilitated by Future First staff.



### **Session 1**

Session one provided students and mentors with an opportunity to get to know each other and build rapport. Students reflected on their skills and strengths and worked with their mentor to set SMART targets to aim towards by the end of the programme.

### **Session 2**

Session two provided students with an opportunity to explore their post-18 options in detail, reflecting on different approaches to education and career planning, as well as learning about important resilience strategies.

### **Session 3**

The final session provided students with an opportunity to learn about the importance of work experience and extra-curricular activities when writing future applications as well as understanding how to write an effective CV and preparing for interviews. Students reflected on the goals they set in the initial session and set new targets for the year ahead.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

Students completed surveys at the beginning and at the end of the programme. These were designed to measure the knowledge they gained and skills they developed as well as students' confidence in their own abilities and motivation to work hard at school. Alongside surveys we asked students to record their learnings in workbooks and collected feedback from volunteer mentors.

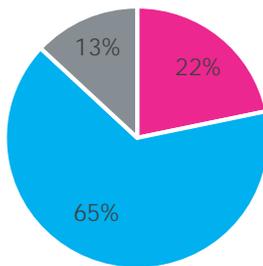
## Findings

### Knowledge about future pathways

Taking part in Future Me Mentoring improved students' knowledge about post-18 pathways and supported them to make more informed decisions about the future. At the start of the programme 56% of students said they knew what they would like to do when they leave school. By the end this had **increased by 21% to 77%**.

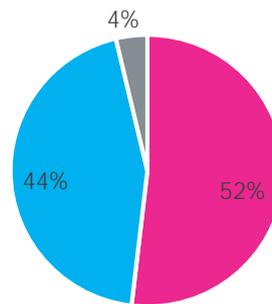
We asked students to respond to the statement "I know about the different pathways I can take when I leave school." Less than a quarter of students (22%) strongly agreed to this statement at the start. By the end of the programme this had **more than doubled** to 52%.

Baseline: I know about the different pathways I can take when I leave school



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Exit: I know about the different pathways I can take when I leave school



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

At the end of each session we asked students to reflect on what they had learnt:



*"I have learnt that there are more pathways to a career than just university"*

*"What UCAS is and how it can help"*

*"How to make informed decisions when picking universities"*

*"About the importance of internships"*

*"I learnt about different pathways after sixth form that I can go down"*



We asked mentors what topics they discussed with their mentees during the sessions. Their responses are summarised in the word cloud below:



**100%** of mentees told us they learnt a lot from their mentors.

**93%** of mentors told us they believed their mentees learnt more about future pathways as a result of the mentoring programme.

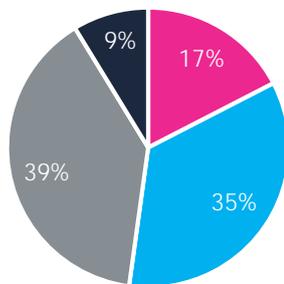
**100%** of mentors told us they believed their mentees were more able to make more informed decisions about their future as a result of the mentoring programme.

## Development of transferable skills

Students learnt about transferable skills and were encouraged to reflect on their own skills and strengths in relation to future courses or jobs.

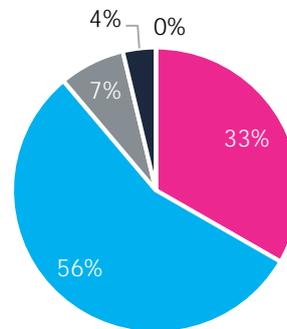
At the start of the programme 52% of students said they knew what skills they needed to take the pathway they were interested in after school. By the end of the programme this had **increased by 37%** to 89%.

Baseline: I know what skills are needed to take the pathway I am interested in after school



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Exit: I know what skills are needed to take the pathway I am interested in after school



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students told us:

*"I learnt how to improve my communication skills and confidence skills"*

*"I have learnt that reflection is a good way to help better yourself"*

*"What skills I need for the job/course that I am interested in"*

*"I learnt resilient strategies that I could utilise"*

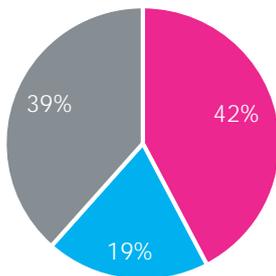
## Social capital

We asked students if they had anyone they could talk to about their next steps after school, in order to better understand the level of support they had access to. Just under half of the students (48%) were unsure or said they did not have anyone to talk to about their next steps. By the end of the programme this had reduced dramatically, with 77% reporting that they now felt they had someone to talk to.

## Confidence

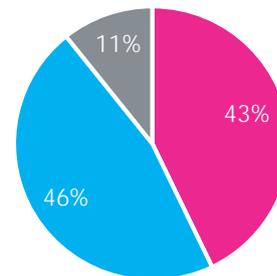
Future Me Mentoring improved students' confidence in their abilities and made them feel more positive about the future. At the start of the programme 61% of students said they were confident they would be successful in the future, by the end of the programme **this had increased by 28%** to 89% of students.

Baseline: I am confident I will be successful in the future



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Exit: I am confident I will be successful in the future



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

In addition, the percentage of students who said they felt positive about the future **increased by 21%** from 64% to 85%

*"I feel more confident in working with my skills and communications."*

*"I have learnt that confidence in your own ability is key and to continue working at my aspirations."*

*"I've learnt that confidence is very important in everything that you do, you will excel more when you have confidence."*

**100%** mentors told us they believed their mentees felt more confident as a result of taking part in the programme

## Motivation

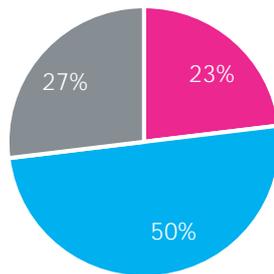
Students felt more motivated to work hard after taking part in mentoring. The percentage of students strongly agreeing to the statement "I feel motivated to work hard at school" **more than doubled** from 23% to 52% by the end of the programme.



*"I feel motivated to work hard at school"*

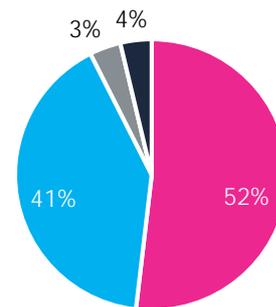
*"It showed me the different pathways I could take after Sixth Form. It helped me to realise what motivated me to do well in life...."*

Baseline: I feel motivated to work hard at school



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Exit: I feel motivated to work hard at school



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## Goal setting

Students were asked to note down one action they would take after the Future Me Mentoring programme ended.

Here's a summary of their actions:

**Improve my CV**

**Get work experience**

**Apply for an internship**

**Focus on being mature in sixth form**

**Research more opportunities**

**Sign up to UCAS**

**Create a routine every day to follow to keep organised**





### Mentee experience

**100%** got on well with their mentor

**100%** learnt a lot from their mentor

**100%** said their mentor made them feel more confident about the future

**100%** said their mentor supported them with their next steps

Students were asked, on a scale of 1-10, **how likely they were to recommend Future Me Mentoring to a friend.**

The average response was **8.5**

### Mentor experience

**100%** of mentors found the training helpful

**93%** rated the facilitation excellent or good

**100%** of mentors got on well with their mentees

*"We had many similarities which helped as an ice breaker, and they were very engaged in each session."*

*"Well matched with my mentee which enabled him and to get the most out of the conversation."*

*"I thought we built a very good rapport with the mentee from first day and got on really well."*

We asked mentors what was the best part of the programme:

*"Meeting the young people. I was greatly impressed and inspired at their tenacity and level of preparedness. My mentees were confident, self-aware, and practiced all the advice we spoke about. They gave good feedback for me and the level of conversations allowed me to prepare myself better."*

*"Being matched with someone who is interested in the field I work in so that I could share my experiences. Building my own skills as a mentor and giving something back to my old school. I hope the programme gets to continue to enable more young people to benefit from it."*



## Molly, mentor

I wanted to sign up for the Future Me Mentoring Programme because I thought it would be a good way to give back. I wanted to see where the current students were thinking of going and it ended up challenging me too because I had to look into something I wasn't aware of. My mentee wanted to look at degrees and apprenticeships and though I definitely have knowledge of apprenticeships I had to do some research into degrees. It also made me critique my own path and reflect on what I'd done.



I see a difference in my mentee from the first to the last session, she is still undecided on what she wants to do but now she's aware of what she needs to take into consideration when looking at different options. We looked at the cost of university compared to apprenticeships but also the practicality of life at university, asking questions like could she move away from home, would she rather be at home, would she need a part time job to help pay for the course? We made a pros and cons list and looked at comparing the different courses and it's hopefully given her the tools to be able to make the decision on her own.

When I was at school we never had anything like this mentoring programme, I would have benefited from it massively. I was one of the very few people out of my friendship group who didn't finish A levels and go on to university. I finished Year 12 and then went on to an apprenticeship and that wasn't seen as the norm. There was no one there helping me look at apprenticeships and make any decisions which is why I wanted to come back and see if there was anyone like me who needed some support.

I think it's important that the mentors on the programme are alumni of the school, it helps the students know that someone from here can do it. Dagenham has got one of the highest rates of poverty in the country and I think if they hear from someone who lives in a more affluent area and how they've gone on to do well it isn't relatable for them. Someone who went to this school, who lived down the road to them, who knows the same streets, helps the relatability factor which is so important.

I would definitely recommend being a mentor. Taking away from the fact that you're helping someone, I think personally it really helps you as well. You're developing your own skills; perhaps skills that you need when you have someone who you're line managing at work or if you're inducting new employees. Of course it's also great to be helping someone and using your own experiences to give them help, it makes it worth it to know that all my advice has helped someone else succeed.

## Siya, Year 12 student

I think it was very useful having a mentor because they were closer to my age, I felt like I could relate to them more than my teachers. I think it's encouraging to see someone who has been in the same position as you become successful.

Before I took part in the mentoring programme I had an idea of what I wanted to do in the future but after the programme it was much clearer. I was able to research different options and it was really helpful to hear from someone who's actually experienced an apprenticeship.

One of the skills that I developed throughout the programme was my communication, I was able to talk about what I like and what I want to take further in life. I feel more confident about the future, before I just had an idea about what I wanted to do whereas now I'm able to visualise myself in a career; being able to see yourself in the future makes you believe in yourself a bit more.

I would recommend the mentoring programme to a friend. I think there are many young people in the same position as me who are unsure about their future and programmes like these can help give you clarity on what you want to do and help you explore different steps and how to get where you want to be.

“ ”

**“I would recommend the mentoring programme to a friend. I think there are many young people in the same position as me who are unsure about their future.” – Siya, The Sydney Russell School**

## Nir, Year 12 student

I found having a mentor really useful because the sole purpose of them being there was to help you with things like careers advice; it's great to have a dedicated mentor for the programme to specifically ask questions to.

Originally I wasn't sure what sort of career I wanted to go into but after hearing my mentor's stories about working at Ernst & Young I found his role in business consultancy really interesting. It is something that would fit my current skill sets and something I'd find interesting and challenging to work towards in the future.

I think the mentoring programme made me more confident that I could be successful in the future. We planned the different routes that I could take and when you see the steps outlined it makes the end goal seem much more realistic. It also helped that our mentor was successful in his field and was able to achieve the sort of job that we might be aiming towards whilst being from the same background as us.

In the future I hope to study at university and I've gained a lot of tips on how to do so from the mentoring programme. It has helped me improve my decision making especially because my mentor has also gone through the same decisions in his past so I can learn from his experiences.

## Sustainability

Sustainability is central to our work at Future First. We support schools to build thriving and engaged networks of alumni volunteers who return to school to support current students. Following the Future Me mentoring sessions we contacted participating school teachers to see if they had had any further contact with the mentor volunteers:

- Two mentors have since offered work experience
- One mentor has since circulated an apprenticeship opportunity to students
- One mentor has returned to school twice to volunteer at a careers assembly and facilitated a workshop on why voting is important and how young people can get their voices heard
- A number of mentors have since registered an interest in having a follow up session with their mentees which is being organised through the teacher.

These examples highlight the importance Future Me Mentoring has had in building relationships between schools and their alumni and the potential for alumni to have a long lasting impact on their mentees as well as the school community as a whole.

## Conclusion

36 Year 12 students participated in Future Me Mentoring. Our findings show that by the end of the programme, students who took part in the pilot had an increased awareness of the different post-18 pathways available to them and felt more able to identify the skills needed for the pathways they were interested in pursuing. As part of the programme, students reflected on their skills and strengths and developed key transferable skills such as communication and resilience strategies. At the start of the programme 56% of students said they knew what they would like to do when they leave school. By the end this had increased to 77%, highlighting the importance the pilot had in supporting students to make more informed decisions about their next steps.

100% said their mentor supported them with their next steps and 100% of mentors told us they got on well with their mentees. In addition, since the project ended a number of volunteers have returned to the classroom to provide advice and guidance to other students, highlighting the success of the pilot in terms of developing long term relationships between schools and alumni volunteers.

This pilot highlights the power mentoring can have in supporting young people to make confident and informed decisions about their next steps, broadening their horizons and opening up new worlds of opportunity. As a result, there is significant potential to expand upon this programme and bring it to more students in the most disadvantaged areas.