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The Wesley Report

Give kids a chance:
Seeing a better future
with mentoring



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Wesley Mission

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Best Options Youth Mentoring

EQUIP Youth Mentoring Program

Out of Home Care Educational Mentoring

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Foreword

One of Wesley Mission's key approaches to supporting vulnerable young people is through mentoring programs. There is strong evidence that mentoring is one of the most effective means of supporting those who are unsure about their future direction or at risk of dropping out.

The 2011 Wesley Mission Report, *Give kids a chance: Seeing a better future with mentoring*, seeks to do two things: firstly, to raise the awareness of the benefits of mentoring for young people and, secondly, to highlight their experiences of mentoring and the need they feel for guidance and support in their crucial teenage years.

Young people aged 12 to 25 face a time of profound personal change as they make the transition from youth to adulthood, and from school to further education, training and employment.

They must make important decisions about remaining in school and what comes after school—decisions which research shows have the potential to profoundly affect their long-term economic prospects, social standing, happiness, health and wellbeing.

Give kids a chance highlights the fragile place these young people find themselves in, with 53 per cent of those surveyed lacking any real clarity about what they want to do in life. What many are clear about, however, is that they want more adult guidance and support than they currently receive.

Almost 70 per cent report that they would benefit from a mentoring relationship over the next 12 months to help with work or career planning, education and practical matters like getting a driver's licence.

The feedback from those respondents with experience of Wesley Mission's various mentoring programs was that they significantly helped them clarify what they want to do in life. Not only that, but they also said that their lives had improved in other, more personal ways, particularly through enhanced self-esteem and making positive choices about things like smoking and drinking.

An estimated 50,000 young people aged 15 to 19 are dropping out of education, training and employment in Australia every year. The longer they remain disengaged, the greater the risks to their future economic prospects and happiness.

There is strong evidence that mentoring is one of the most effective means of supporting young people who are unsure about their future pathways or are at risk of dropping out. Mentoring, quite literally, can help young people see a different future.

Give kids a chance is timely, given new Australian Government requirements, introduced in 2010, which raised the compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 17 and introduced a raft of new associated requirements.

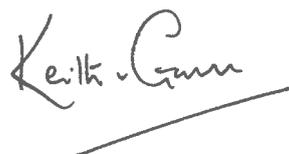
While it is too early to fully assess the impact of these changes, we have anecdotal evidence from Wesley Mission's extensive youth services that young people today are feeling under increased pressure as they make the transition to adulthood.

Wesley Mission runs a number of mentoring programs. Aunties & Uncles provides ongoing support to younger children through pairing them with a volunteer "aunt" or "uncle". The EQUIP program connects young people in Western Sydney with an older adult volunteer.

In addition, many of Wesley Mission's youth and recreation services incorporate informal mentoring approaches aimed at providing one-on-one support to young people. These include youth outreach centres, youth homelessness services, foster care programs and our Vision Valley recreation camp.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in the policy forum which helped Wesley Mission define some concrete recommendations that can flow from the findings contained in this report. It is these recommendations that can give structure and direction to governments and service providers.

By providing an opportunity to really listen to young people and to the service providers who work with vulnerable young people daily, we hope that this report will inform future mentoring approaches. We hope it will enable programs to better support those who are struggling to find their way at a time when the pressures on them can be daunting.



Rev Dr Keith V Garner
CEO/Superintendent
Wesley Mission

Executive summary

Wesley Mission is calling for a greater focus on youth mentoring in Australia at a time when education policy, labour market conditions, and family and community structures are in flux.

Key findings

Many young people lack direction and have no clear goals for the future

Fifty three per cent of all young people have no real clarity about what they want to do in life, and no clear plans for the next few years, in terms of their career. More than one in five young people have no real idea about what they want to do in the longer term, and/or just intend to take life as it comes for the next few years. Only half of young people surveyed say that their current mix of work and study feels like good preparation for what they want to do in life.

Many young people want more adult support and guidance

One in three young people is hungry for more adult guidance and support than they currently receive. Between 10 and 19 per cent of young people “go it alone”—they reportedly receive no adult guidance and support in their lives in relation to practical, personal, education, work or career matters.

This isolation is more typical among older teens. More than one in four 18 to 20-year-olds reported receiving no guidance or support with work (26 per cent) or education (27 per cent), compared to less than one in ten 15 to 17-year-olds (10 per cent work, seven per cent education).

Most young people have heard of mentoring, but few have direct experience

Most young people (87 per cent) have heard of mentoring but based on their understanding of what mentoring is, only 27 per cent say they have had a mentor themselves.

Young people believe in the benefits of mentoring

More than 69 per cent of young people surveyed believe they would benefit from a mentoring relationship over the next 12 months. Interest was highest among 15 to 17-year-olds (79 per cent), dropping slightly to 72 per cent for 18 to 19-year-olds and then more dramatically to 47 per cent for 20-year-olds. The main demand was for mentoring with work or career planning (59 per cent), followed by education (50 per cent) and practical matters (50 per cent).

Mentoring helps young people gain clarity about their career goals and plans

Among young people with direct experience of mentoring through Wesley Mission’s services, mentoring was found to have a significant impact on helping them to clarify what they want to do in life. Just seven per cent of those surveyed had clear goals prior to entering the mentoring relationship. Over half had some ideas but no clear goals. After mentoring, however, more than half reported having clear goals, and three in four reported having some ideas.

Compared to four in 10 young people who had no idea about what they wanted to do in life before mentoring, only two per cent still did not know after having been in a mentoring relationship. For the vast majority—around three in four—their clarity about their goals improved as a result of mentoring, and almost a third reported that their goals had become bigger and more ambitious. For many (38 per cent), their goals were different yet no more ambitious, and the majority (77 per cent) reported that their plans had become more realistic.

Mentoring makes a deep impact on the lives of young people

Four in five young people with direct experience of mentoring through Wesley Mission reported a “very positive impact”.

The most significant impact reported was enhanced self-esteem. Four in five mentees* reported that their self-esteem had improved as a direct result of the relationship.

Other key findings of the research in relation to life outcomes were:

- a total of 65 per cent reported that they took more responsibility for their actions because of mentoring
- most other positive outcomes were reported by between half and two-thirds of mentees. This includes outcomes relating to educational attainment (65 per cent); quality of relationships (65 per cent), employment prospects (59 per cent); anti-social behaviour (58 per cent); coping with life’s problems (58 per cent), and making choices about smoking, drinking and drugs (56 per cent).



One in three young people is hungry for more adult guidance and support than they currently receive.

* The term “mentee” refers to a young person who is or had been mentored in a formal program.

Compiling this report

The people who are seeking Wesley Mission's services are getting younger. Many are looking for support from caring, non-judgmental and understanding adults—particularly if they are not receiving this kind of support from their families.

Background

Throughout this survey we employ the terms “mentor” and “mentee”, referring in the first instance to the person who is the adult guide or role model (the “mentor”) and the person who is being mentored (the “mentee”).

For the purposes of this report, the following definition of a mentor was supplied to respondents:

“A mentor is a person who can draw on their life experience to give you advice, support and guidance. They can help you think through your priorities, set goals and make plans for how you can achieve these goals and overcome the obstacles in your path.”

This report is based on information gathered from a range of sources:

1. A review of published literature on youth mentoring
2. Focus groups consisting of staff from some of Wesley Mission's service providers who work with vulnerable young people
3. Two surveys of young people:
 - an online survey (“survey one”) of 211 young people drawn from the “Survey Village” panel (see Appendix B), which includes young people from across NSW aged 15 to 20, but mostly from Sydney
 - a mixed method (online and hard copy—“survey two”) survey carried out by Wesley Mission staff among 47 young people who are, or have been, involved with the organisation's mentoring programs (see Appendix C).
4. Interviews with people who have received mentoring through Wesley Mission's programs
5. A workshop with Wesley Mission staff and external parties to discuss policy recommendations arising from the research and their experience with youth mentoring.

This report also incorporates qualitative data gathered in 2009 through in-depth interviews with six clients mentored through the Aunties & Uncles mentoring program, which sought their views on the impact and outcomes¹.

The primary results in this report are from the quantitative surveys done in July and August 2011.

The data-gathering process

Survey one

In July 2011, a short online survey was sent to members of the “Survey Village” online panel. The recipients were young people aged 16 to 18, as well as parents of children aged 16 to 18 (who were invited to pass the survey on to their child).

Around 217 young people aged 15 to 20 responded. This broader age range was a product of minor inaccuracies in the demographic profile data held by Survey Village, as well as the fact that parents could theoretically pass the survey onto children of any age.

A total of 211 responses were included in the analysis. This excluded a handful of respondents who had skipped important questions or not taken the exercise seriously.

This sample provides a reasonable snapshot of the views and experiences of young people in their final years of secondary school, the early years of tertiary study and/or their first years in the workforce.

A more detailed analysis (breaking the responses down by age and sex) was undertaken, but with some caution given the moderate sample size.

A detailed breakdown of the profiles of respondents is provided in Appendix A.

1. This research was undertaken by Lorna Clarkson, December, 2009.

Survey two

In June and July 2011, Wesley Mission's youth program managers were provided with a questionnaire and asked to:

- invite past or present clients aged 14–19, who have been or are being mentored, to take part in the survey
- explain to clients who were mentored as part of a broader program (rather than a specific “mentoring program”) who the mentor might be (eg their caseworker)
- direct mentees to the online survey link, or give them the hard copy (which was slightly simplified), if they did not have internet access.

Around 100 responses were expected but the actual response was around one-third of this figure. An additional 10 mentees were interviewed by phone by a researcher from the University of Wollongong.

The total sample size was n=47 mentees. Although this is not a large sample, it is certainly adequate to provide an indication of the spectrum of typical mentoring outcomes and experiences.

It should be noted that the sample size tends to differ from question to question in the following report, usually sitting in the mid to low 40s rather than exactly 47. This is because the survey was completed in hard copy by 15 mentees; the online version did not allow respondents to skip any questions.

Copies of the questionnaires are also provided in the appendices.



A mentor is a person who can draw on their life experience to give advice, support and guidance.



Chapter 1

Facing the future

the future

the future



Chapter 1: Facing the future

It is a concern that three in five young people aged 15 to 17 lack the clarity to make good decisions about their goals. This is particularly worrying in light of changes, introduced in 2010, which raised the compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 17. This requires important career decisions at this age.

Hopes and dreams

Survey respondents in the general population were asked about their goals and plans relating to education, training and employment.

Nine in 10 have at least a few ideas about what they want to do, and two in five say they have clear goals (see Figure 1.1). Fifty one per cent of young people surveyed have some ideas about what they want to do, but lack clear goals.

With short-term goals, however, fewer than two in five (36 per cent) have worked out a clear plan for the next few years (see Figure 1.2).

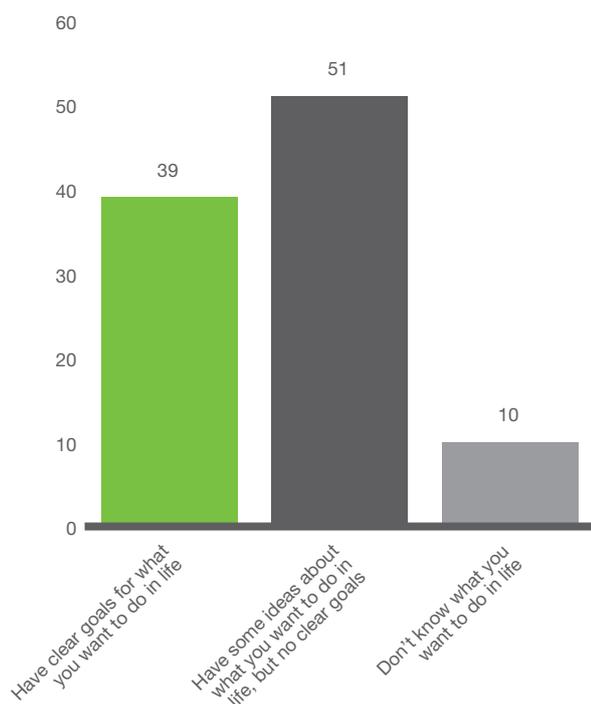
Planning a career

Clarity about career goals and plans is more common among 18 to 20-year-olds (30 per cent) than 15 to 17-year-olds (16 per cent). The younger cohort is correspondingly more likely to be in the “middle category” —with some direction but no real clarity (64 per cent, compared with 46 per cent of 18 to 20-year-olds). No gender differences are apparent.

Greater clarity among those aged over 17 is to be expected. Most would have already left school and made decisions about whether to proceed to higher education, training or seek full-time employment.

Figure 1.1: Goals for the future (%)

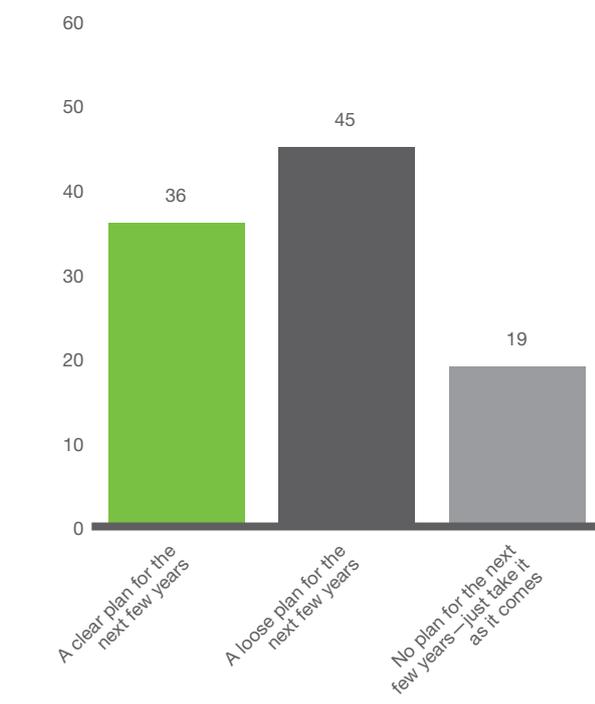
Thinking about the future, would you say you...



n=211

Figure 1.2: Plans for the next few years (%)

Would you say you have...



n=210

The research suggests, however, that many 15 to 17-year-olds would benefit from greater clarity about their goals and plans. This is particularly in light of Australian Government education policy changes, introduced in 2010, which raised the compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 17. This requires young people to make important career decisions at this age.

Furthermore, the NSW Government announced in August 2011 its intention to abolish the School Certificate in 2012—the academic qualification available to 15 to 16-year-olds leaving school after Year 10.

In this context, it is a concern that three in five young people aged 15 to 17 lack enough clarity to help them make good decisions at this stage. They may also be feeling increased pressure due to changes in educational requirements—an important question for future research.

Anecdotal evidence from Wesley Mission's service providers indicates that the changes to youth and family benefits associated with the new policies are putting additional strain on some young people, and the families who rely on them remaining in education or training to receive financial support.²

In a broader context, there is strong evidence that young people who have clear goals and plans are more likely to make smooth and successful transitions from school to further education and training or to their first job (Anlezark, 2011). Also, those who have some sort of strategic career plan also tend to be more motivated while they are at school, and have a greater chance of long-term career success (Thomson & Hillman, 2010).

Uncertain prospects

Many of the young people surveyed indicate that they have little confidence that their current education, training or employment will help them turn their dreams into reality. Only half say that their current mix of work and study feels like good preparation for what they want to do in life.

The Australian Government's rationale for raising the school leaving age was to improve young people's prospects. It aims to give them a better chance of making a successful transition to future education, training and employment.

Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent (Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate III or higher) has been shown to have a wide range of longer-term benefits, including improving young people's self-confidence, socio-economic status and associated life choices, and reducing their likelihood of experiencing financial stress (Fitzpatrick et al, 2011; Headey and Wooden, 2004; NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010).

Young people who attain Year 12 or equivalent generally find their first job more quickly than those who do not, and this can be an important indicator of future labour market prospects (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010; Fitzpatrick et al, 2011).

In a changing labour market, characterised by declining numbers of lower-skilled jobs and semi-skilled manufacturing jobs and the rise of the technical and service economies, early school leavers are increasingly disadvantaged. In 2010, the unemployment rate of teenagers not in full-time education in 2010 was nearly 18 per cent (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010).

Many are at risk of becoming vulnerable to years of low wages and employment instability—caught in a cycle of disengagement and “lost dreams” (Birdwell, Grist & Margot, 2011).

2. The Compact with Young Australians introduced changes to available financial supports – the Youth Allowance and Family Tax Benefit – making young people's participation in education and training a prerequisite for these payments.



Chapter 2

Under pressure

pressure

guide





Chapter 2: Under pressure

Young people in Australia today are experiencing significantly increased stress. Concern about school or study is on the rise, particularly among 15 to 19-year-olds. For many young people who are feeling this pressure, giving up and dropping out altogether may seem like a desirable option.

Clarifying goals

Compared to the general youth survey, the survey of young people engaged in Wesley Mission’s mentoring programs revealed a more immediate focus on just “getting by”.

Only seven per cent of mentees said they had “clear goals”, prior to starting their mentoring relationship.

Fifty three per cent indicated that they had no clear goals. A further 40 per cent said they “don’t know what they want to do in life” (see Figure 2.1). This shows a high degree of uncertainty, compared to the general population.

In terms of short-to-medium term career planning, the results among Wesley Mission mentees similarly indicate a high degree of uncertainty—and potentially also disengagement.

Only five per cent of mentees said they had “a clear plan for the next few years”, prior to the start of their mentoring relationship. Two in three said they had “no plan” for the next few years, and intended to “just take it as it comes” (see Figure 2.2).

As with the previous data relating to goals (see Figure 2.1), this shows a significant lack of direction among mentees when compared to young people in general, more than one in three of whom had a clear plan and only one in five of whom had no plan (see Figure 2.2, as well as earlier discussion around Figure 1.2).

Figure 2.1: Presence and clarity of life goals, before mentoring (%)

■ Clear goals for what I want to do in life
■ Some ideas about what I want to do in life, but no clear goals
■ Don't know what I want to do in life

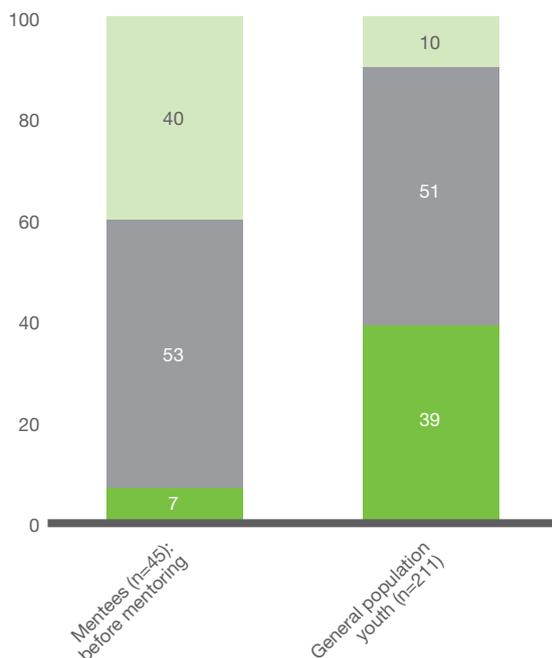
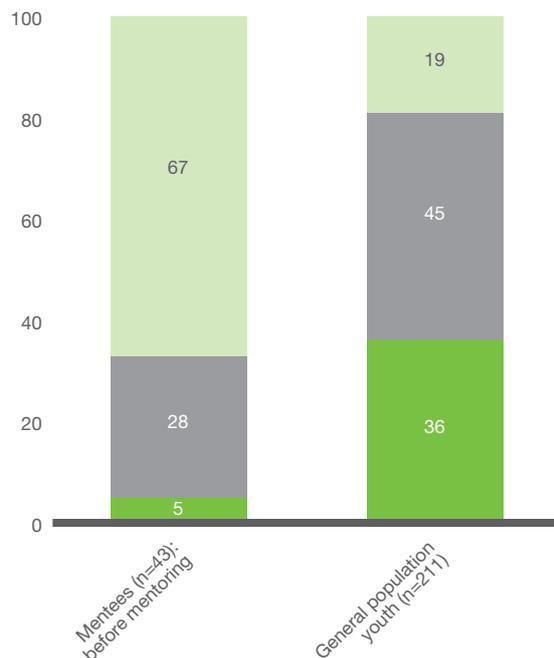


Figure 2.2: Presence and clarity of plans for the next few years, before mentoring (%)

■ A clear plan for the next few years
■ A loose plan for the next few years
■ No plan for the next few years—just take it as it comes



The survey indicates a high level of continuing engagement with work and study among mentees, despite their lack of clarity around career goals and plans. This may suggest that mentoring has had a positive impact on young people remaining engaged, despite lacking clear goals—a known risk factor for disengagement.

The relatively small sample of Wesley Mission mentees does not enable further analysis of the characteristics of those young people who reported no change to their clarity of plans following mentoring.

Feeling the pressure

Focus groups with Wesley Mission service providers revealed the profound extent of the challenges and pressures facing the young people who access (or are referred to) support through youth drop-in centres, crisis accommodation services, independent living services, vocational education and training services, or mentoring programs.

We know that young people across Australia today are feeling significantly increased amounts of stress. Concern about school or study problems is on the rise, particularly among 15 to 19-year-olds (Mission Australia, 2010). For many young people who are feeling the pressure, giving up and dropping out altogether may seem like a desirable option.

While most of the Wesley Mission mentees who completed the survey for this research were fully engaged, evidence from Wesley Mission's service providers indicates that a substantial number of the ones they see are falling through the cracks.

As one commented:

“The decisions young people have to make at school assume a certain brain capacity, decision-making capacity and a particular literacy level that some young people just don't have.”

Many of them struggle with feelings that they do not fit in at school. They might have trouble with basic literacy and numeracy and feel embarrassed about this, so choose to disengage instead.

Others lack a safe and secure home in which to study. Qualitative research with service providers, asking them to imagine the home environment of a 15-year-old who is disengaging from school, revealed that parents or significant other adult carers may be effectively absent. Lack of routine, structure and a sense of detachment and isolation may also characterise this young person's home, along with a lack of security or sense of safety, strangers in the house and lack of food or furniture.

The impact of the absence of supportive adults at home, and other negative family circumstances, on a young person's educational attainment and ability to make school-to-work transitions is significant (Dockery, 2010).

Cultural considerations

While the critical importance for young people of social connectedness and “fitting in” is well recognised, there is still a long way to go to effectively support those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In particular, achievement levels of Indigenous students in areas such as literacy and Year 12 completion remain significantly lower than non-Indigenous students. Less than half of all Indigenous young people completed Year 12 or equivalent in 2009, compared to more than three quarters of non-Indigenous young people (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010: 43).

A key target of the Coalition of Australian Government's National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap—COAG, 2008) is to halve the gap between attainment rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent by 2020. In this context, the need for culturally-inclusive education environments and also for culturally-specific mentoring programs, particularly programs targeted at supporting Indigenous high school students, is apparent.

Chapter 2: Under pressure

The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Program (AIME), which aims to increase Year 10 and Year 12 progression rates and university admission rates for all participating Indigenous Australian students, has been found to be effective in this context. The program reported that in 2010 the overall Year 10 progression rate was 87 per cent, and the Year 12 completion rate was 100 per cent. These rates are significantly above the averages for Indigenous young people nationally.³

Defining youth “at risk”

Every year an estimated 50,000 young people aged 15 to 19 drop out of education and training and are unemployed (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010b). For many, taking a break from work or study is temporary and won't necessarily impact on their prospects (Anlezark, 2011). But for those who drop out for extended periods, the impact on future employment and wider prospects is profound.

The literature shows that the influences and risk factors associated with young people disengaging are complex, involving interconnected personal, institutional, economic and labour market factors (Rothman & Hillman, forthcoming, in Anlezark, 2011; TeRiele, K, 2006).

The risk is significantly higher among those who are struggling with literacy and numeracy; who are being bullied and who feel like they “don't fit in” at school; who are mentally or physically disabled; who are from disadvantaged or low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds; who are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) or non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB); who are from rural and remote communities; who have left home early, or who are required to support their parents financially and otherwise, for example if their parents suffer from mental illness.

These may be understood in terms of “push” factors—such as not liking school, or wanting to seek a job or apprenticeship, and “pull” factors—such as disability, health-related or financial reasons (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010: 43).

Defining youth “at risk” in terms of those who are disengaging from education, training and employment structures, raises complex questions. Research suggests that the use of the term “at risk” in this context may in fact further stigmatise young people who are already vulnerable (Anlezark, 2011; TeRiele, 2006).

Terms such as “marginalised students” have been suggested as more helpful, in that they identify individuals through their relationship with school institutions, rather than through their personal characteristics (TeRiele, 2006).

Establishing trust

“We see young people who have got emotional development issues or arrested development issues, for example kids who have been in foster care or who have come through the guardianship of state. By the time they're 16 and come to our service, they're still acting like 10-year-olds. They're supposed to be adult and be able to sign leases and make decisions about finances, but mostly they can't because their risk boundaries and risk management and decision-making are all skewed. They need a lot of support to become sustainably independent.” (Staff member, Wesley Supported Accommodation Services)

“Sixteen and 17-year-olds are the hardest to work with because a lot of other issues would have already occurred in their lives that we need to work with so they can become fully independent.” (Staff member, Wesley Supported Accommodation Services)

Far from making plans and setting goals, some young people are entirely focused on the day-to-day struggle for survival—emotional, physical and spiritual.

Wesley Mission's youth services are regularly focused on meeting the immediate needs of young people in crisis. This may include helping them find stable accommodation or providing assistance with independent living skills, offering emotional support or a shoulder to lean on. All of this must be offered, in many cases, long before goal-setting or employment-seeking can begin.

3. In total AIME worked with 529 young people in 2010 from Years Seven to 12, a 60 per cent increase on the number reached in 2009 of 325. Of these AIME students it is estimated that a quarter will progress from Year Nine through to university. This is comparable to the non-Indigenous rate of just over a third, and significantly ahead of the national rate of 3.2 per cent for Indigenous students.

Focusing on “life goals” through mentoring risks increasing pressure on the mentee and “sets them up to fail”. The mentoring relationship must instead focus on small steps associated with establishing trust and providing practical assistance in “helping them to stay alive”, on the understanding that over time, their horizons will start to change.

In this context, the relationship may have a stronger focus on basic tasks like establishing trust and enabling a young person to develop their personal capacity and self-esteem, and sense of control over their life choices. Much of the focus in this case may be on building resilience in the young person to enable them to better face life’s challenges.



Far from making plans and setting goals, some young people are entirely focused on the day-to-day struggle for survival—emotional, physical and spiritual.

Seeking to establish relationships with a young person’s school is one way in which Wesley Mission’s services look to support those who are struggling. This is particularly important given that issues such as “not liking school, not doing well or not having suitable courses available” are the most common reasons for young Australians dropping out—cited by two in five of all early leavers (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010).

Wesley Mission recognises that supporting a young person to establish positive relationships at school may have far-reaching impacts. Aside from supporting their ongoing engagement with school, this has been found to increase their wellbeing and resilience, not only while they are at school, but throughout their life (Thomson & Hilman, 2010; Gray & Hackling, 2009; Wesley Mission, 2007).

The potential for mentors to play an advocacy role in seeking to strengthen networks of support around a young person, involving school communities and mainstream services, is explored in Chapter 7.



Mentoring — everyone wins

It's a cliché, but “win-win” still seems the best way to describe the outcome for both children and volunteers involved in Wesley Mission's Aunties & Uncles mentoring program. For the disadvantaged kids, the program is a chance to experience a different life to the stressful one they usually lead at home. For the volunteers, Aunties & Uncles is a way to give something back to a society that has been good to them.

Aunties & Uncles has operated in Sydney since 1974 and matches volunteers (the “aunties” and “uncles”) with children from three to 13.

“The parent, and it’s almost always a single mum, initially approaches us to ask if we can find a role model for their child,” Manager Michelle Parrish said.

“If the child is comfortable with the idea, we’ll then match them with a stable and empathetic individual or couple who commit to building a long-term relationship based on mentoring.”

What are the key elements of this relationship?

“It must be one-on-one, non-judgmental, and involve supporting and encouraging the child through periods of transition for a significant period of time,” Michelle said.

Typically, the relationship might start with the aunties and uncles taking the child out for the day one weekend a month. Over time—and the emphasis is on developing the relationship slowly—the visits will usually become more frequent and eventually involve the child staying overnight with their “extended family”.

When staff ask the kids what they like best about the program, the response is almost always the same: it’s a chance to have some fun.

“Picture a nine-year-old living in a home where there is no father, mum might have mental health issues, there are young siblings who the child has to help with, there’s no money, food consists of pizzas and burgers, hygiene is not a priority, holidays are unheard of, and you begin to understand why the child might leap at the idea of a day out,” Michelle said.

Michelle said many of the kids who come to Aunties & Uncles have never eaten fruit and vegetables; they’ve never ridden a bike or been to the movies; they’ve never seen the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

“Unbelievable though this seems, they often grow up in the very narrow confines of their disadvantaged neighbourhood where their life consists of home, school and the street,” she said.

“Aunties & Uncles is their chance to experience a different life and to have their eyes opened to an alternative reality. While it gives them something to aspire to, the experience is also about enabling them to improve their own family life.

“One eight-year-old girl took great pleasure in inviting her auntie home so she could show her how she’d learned how to put a cloth on the table and how to lay out the knives and forks, something that had never happened at home before.”

Volunteers are encouraged to try as many new things with the children as possible. This might involve going to the beach, learning to cook, learning to use a knife and fork in many cases, trying new foods, going fishing or camping, getting to know a pet, being in a car (lots of single mums don’t drive).

The other thing the kids report learning is how to trust adults.

“Kids from these backgrounds often only see erratic behaviour from adults and become very wary,” Michelle said. “The mentoring experience slowly restores their trust as they see what healthy relationships look like and this has enormous impact in enabling them to form stable relationships in later life.”

Seventy per cent of the children are still involved with their mentors well into their 20s, even though the programs cuts out at 13.

Other benefits for the kids include learning communication skills, how to better manage their emotions, and how to believe in themselves.

“The aunties and uncles also learn a lot too. What surprises many of them, for example, is that the kids are so capable in many ways—they know how to pay bills, wash clothes, vacuum, call various services, throw together a meal,” Michelle said.

“Emotionally, however, they’re still just kids.”

The mentors also invariably find what they were looking for when they volunteered for the program—the satisfaction of being able giving something back—is realised many times over. Most will mentor a second child after the initial one has graduated from the program and they invariably tell their friends about the benefits which means that Aunties & Uncles never has to advertise for volunteers.

What shouldn’t be forgotten is that this program doesn’t replace the existing family, but rather extends it.

“The parents who come to us for support are trying hard to give their kids an opportunity,” Michelle said.

“They love them but for one reason or another—mental illness, addictions, no relationship skills themselves—they can’t provide it. The mums know they are trapped in a sad life but don’t want their kids to be.”

The biggest hurdle to being able to offer more mentoring is, as always, lack of funds.

“We have 183 kids currently on our waiting list but this year we only had enough funding to train and monitor 20 new volunteers. It’s very labour intensive,” Michelle said. 



Chapter 3

Someone to turn to

to turn to
colleagues



Chapter 3: Someone to turn to

For young people who lack positive older role models and receive no adult guidance and support, the potential for structured mentoring to fill the void is strongly apparent. This is particularly the case given the positive results reported by those young people who have been mentored.

Attitudes to adult input

As they go about setting goals and making plans, most young people value input from older people.

Among the general population youth sample, 34 per cent say that guidance and support from older people is indispensable; another 54 per cent describe it as “a good idea, but not essential” (see Figure 3.1). This leaves only one in nine who pay no attention to adult input (11 per cent) and two young people who feel they are better off without it.

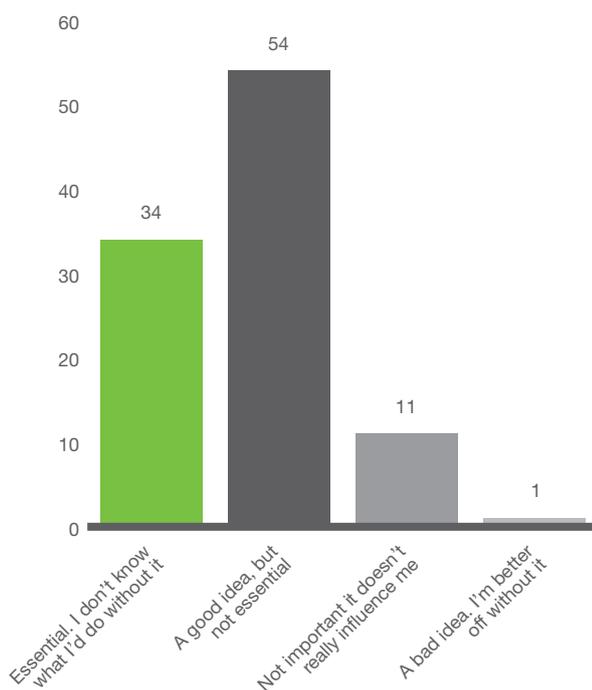
Two in three young people feel they have enough adult input and guidance in their life—including 11 per cent who get more than they want as well as 56 per cent who say they get “about the right amount”.

This leaves one in three young people hungry for more adult guidance and support than they currently receive (see Figure 3.2).

An interesting age differential emerges here, with one in four of the older respondents (18 to 20-year-olds) wanting more adult input, even though consider it only a “good idea”, and not “essential”. This appears to be a product of two opposing trends:

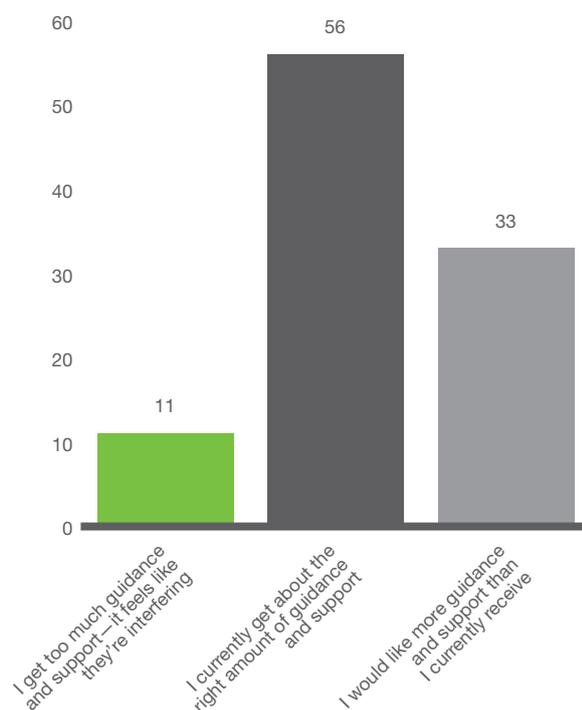
- as teenagers grow older they become less reliant on adult input: some 42 per cent of 15 to 18-year-olds describe adults input as “essential”; this view is only held by 19 per cent of 19 to 20-year-olds
- however, access to adult input drops at a faster rate than young people would like: some 37 per cent of 18 to 20-year-olds say they would like more input from older people than they currently receive, compared with 28 per cent of 15 to 17-year-olds.

Figure 3.1: How important do you feel it is to get guidance and support from people older than you to help you think about your future, set goals, make plans? (%)



Base: all respondents n=211

Figure 3.2: Do you feel you get the right amount of guidance and support from people older than you to help you think about your future, set goals, make plans etc? (%)



Base: all respondents n=211

This reflects the challenge of providing age-appropriate guidance for young people. As a child transitions into young adulthood, parents and influential older people still need to be available to offer guidance. However, they need to carefully manage how they frame this input, eg as “advice for the taking if you’d like” rather than “essential instructions to obey”.

The desire for more adult input was also more common among young women (36 per cent, compared to 30 per cent among their male peers).

Receiving guidance and support

Another way this question was explored in the survey was by asking young people where they had received guidance and support on:

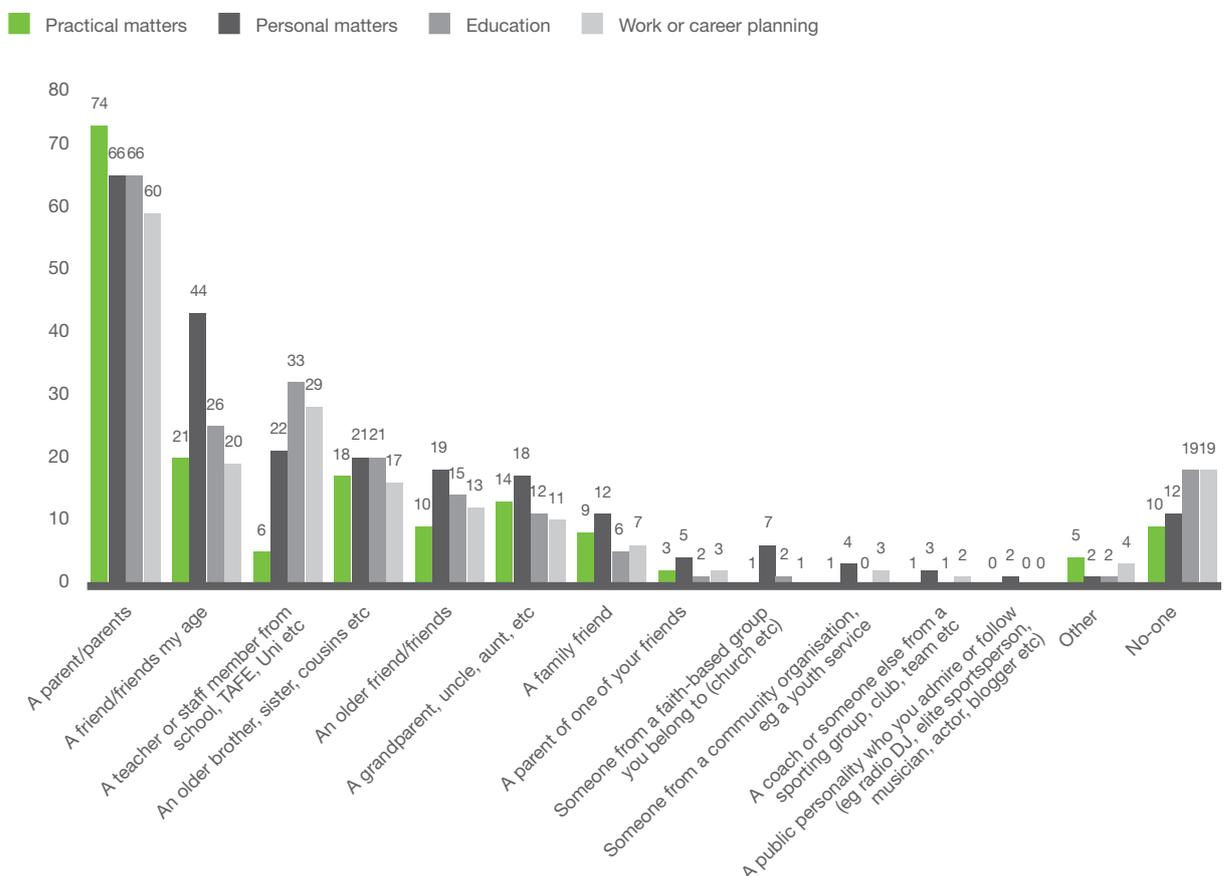
- practical matters—managing money, getting a driver’s license, looking after their health etc
- personal matters—family and relationships, making decisions about sex, alcohol, drugs etc
- their education—picking subjects at school, choosing a course at TAFE or Uni, managing the stress of assignments and exams etc

- work or career planning—thinking about their career, finding work, dealing with stressful situations in the workplace etc.

The main patterns are detailed below and in Figure 3.3:

- most young people, but not all, receive guidance and support on these issues (practical matters 90 per cent, personal matters 88 per cent, education 81 per cent, work and career 81 per cent)
- however, between 10 and 19 per cent “go it alone”. This is more typical among older teens: more than one in four 18 to 20-year-olds reported receiving no guidance or support with work (26 per cent) or education (27 per cent), compared with less than one in ten 15 to 17-year-olds (10 per cent work, seven per cent education). Fourteen young people in the survey said that no-one had given them any guidance and support about any of these issues—all except two were aged 19 or 20

Figure 3.3: Who (if anyone) has given you guidance and support? (%)



Base: all respondents n=211

Chapter 3: Someone to turn to

- young people are more likely to receive guidance and support from their parents than anyone else, regardless of the issue (practical matters 74 per cent, personal matters 66 per cent, education 66 per cent, work and career 60 per cent). This pattern holds true regardless of age
- for personal and practical matters, peers are the second most common source of guidance and support (personal 44 per cent, practical 21 per cent)
- for education and career advice, teachers are the second most common source of guidance (33 per cent education, 29 per cent work)
- three other sources of support drawn on by more than 10 per cent of young people are:
 - older siblings and cousins—average 19 per cent (17 to 21 per cent depending on the issue)
 - older friends—average 15 per cent (10 to 19 per cent depending on the issue)
 - grandparents, uncles, aunts etc—average 14 per cent (11 to 18 per cent depending on the issue).

Figure 3.4: Proportion of young people (by age) that currently have a positive older role model in their lives (%)

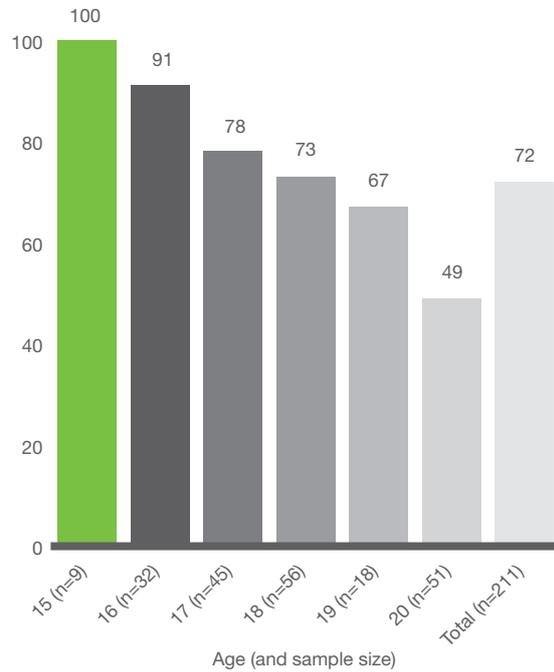
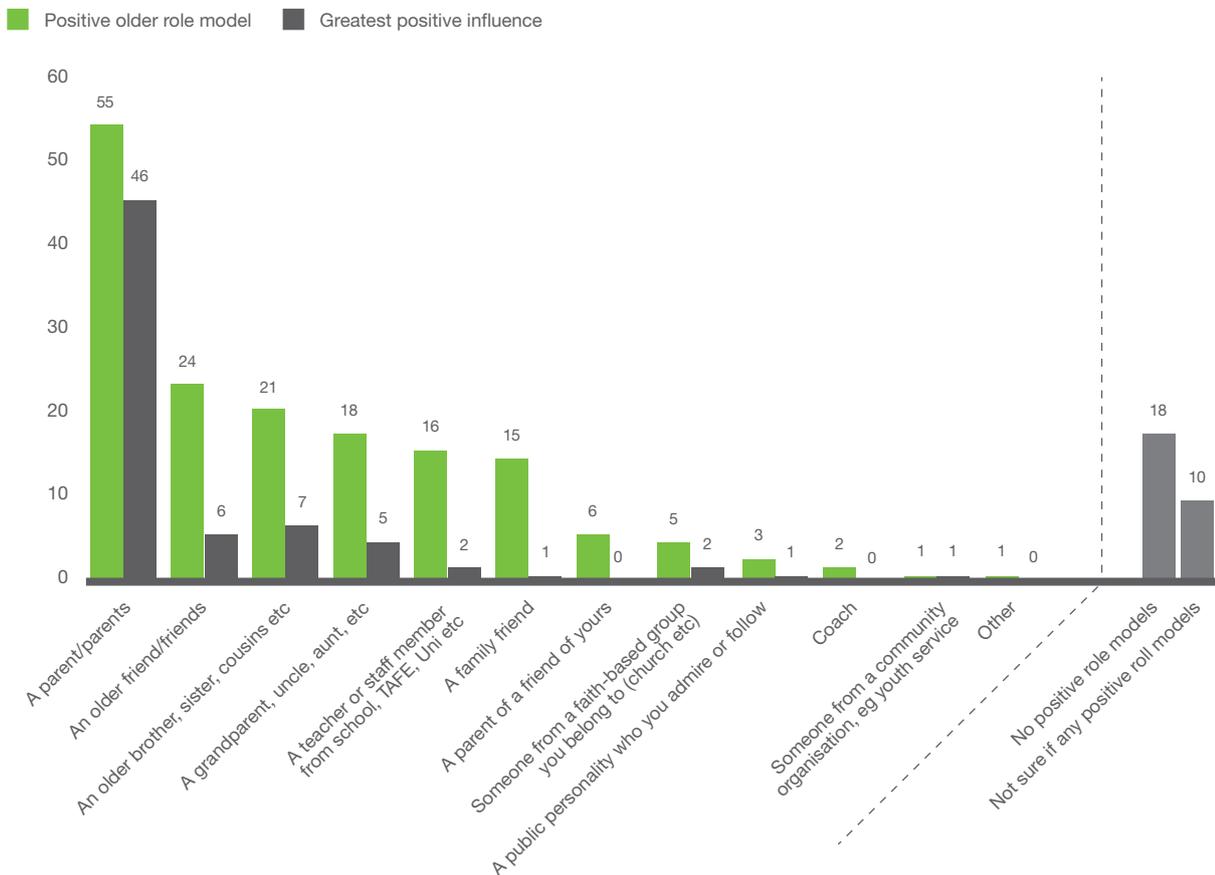


Figure 3.5: Do you have any positive older role models in your life? Who are they? Which of your role models has had the greatest positive influence on your life? (%)



Base: all respondents n=211

Positive older role models

Close to three in four young people (72 per cent) report having at least one positive older role model in their life whom they respect and trust, to whom they can go to for support with a problem, or to whom they look for guidance and direction.

This proportion drops with age, from 100 per cent of 15-year-olds and 91 per cent of 16-year-olds to 67 per cent of 19-year-olds and 49 per cent of 20-year-olds (see Figure 3.4). This is primarily a product of older respondents (18 to 20-year-olds) being less inclined than their younger peers (aged 15 to 17) to list family members as positive older role models: ie parents (30 per cent versus 68 per cent), older siblings and cousins (nine per cent versus 27 per cent) or other extended family members (four per cent versus 24 per cent).

Overall, parents were the most commonly cited older role models (55 per cent) and were identified as the single most positive influential role models in 46 per cent of young people’s lives (see Figure 3.5).

Other common role models included older friends (24 per cent), older siblings or cousins (21 per cent), extended family members (18 per cent), teachers (16 per cent) and family friends (15 per cent). However, these people rarely had the “greatest positive influence”, compared to parents.

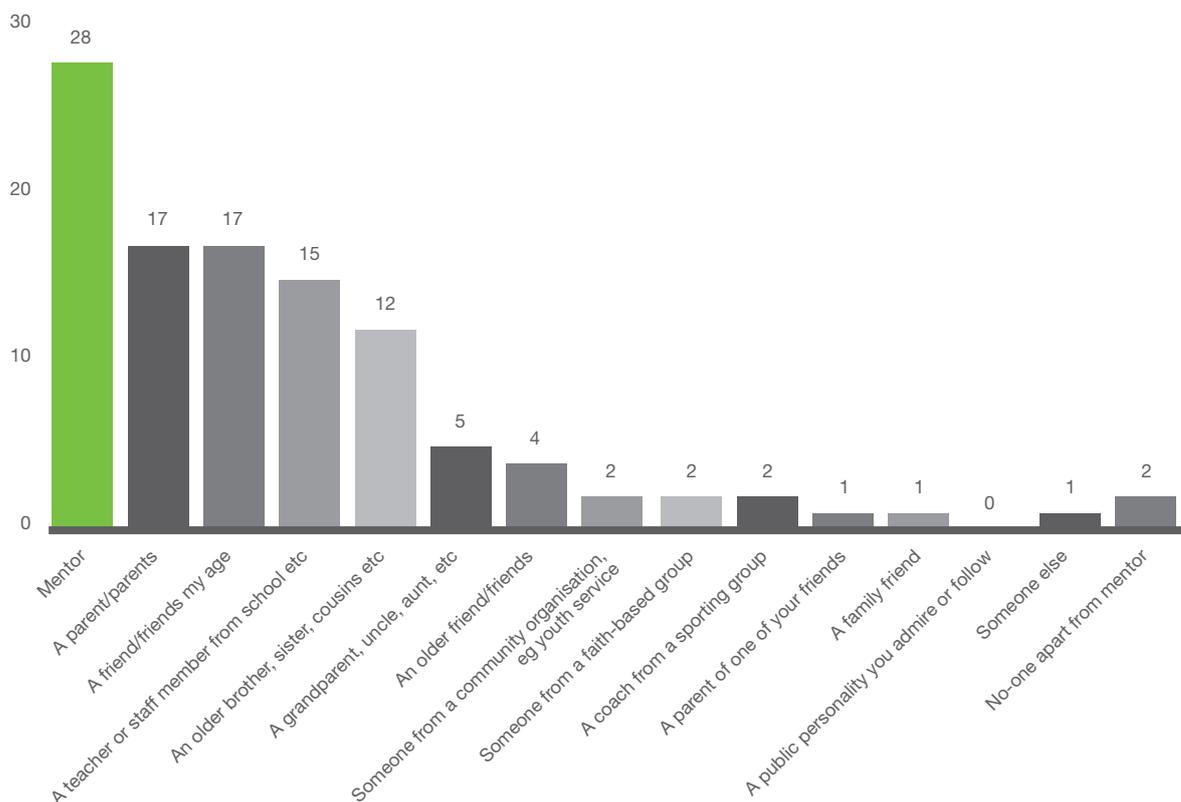
Among the Wesley Mission clients surveyed, all but two said they had turned to their mentor in seeking support and guidance with an important decision (see Figure 3.6).

Just over half had sought guidance from parents, and an equal proportion had sought guidance from their friends.

The research supports the existing body of evidence on the fundamental importance of family and peer-based support structures for a young person—relationships that may be conceived as informal mentoring relationships (Hartley, 2004).

For those one in five young people who reportedly lack positive older role models in their life and receive no adult guidance and support, the potential for structured mentoring relationships to fill the void is strongly apparent.

Figure 3.6: Who mentees spoke to about their ‘big decisions’ (number of respondents)



n=30 who had a big decision to make during mentoring relationship

Maybe a mentor

Mentoring—in the formal sense—essentially offers young people someone to turn to, through a structured relationship. It may be defined as follows:

“A mentor is person who can draw on their life experience to give you advice, support and guidance. They can help you think through your priorities, set goals and make plans for how you can achieve these goals and overcome the obstacles in your path.”

Towards the end of the survey, young people were given the above definition of mentoring. Over two in three (69 per cent) said they would benefit from a relationship like that over the next 12 months (see Figure 3.7).

Interest was highest among 15 to 17-year-olds, dropping slightly for 18 to 19-year-olds and then more dramatically for 20-year-olds (Figure 3.7).

The main demand was for mentoring about work or career planning (59 per cent), followed by education (50 per cent) and practical matters (50 per cent). The idea of mentoring on personal matters appealed to two in five young people (41 per cent) (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.7: Proportion of young people (by age) who feel they would benefit from mentoring over the coming 12 months (on any topic) (%)

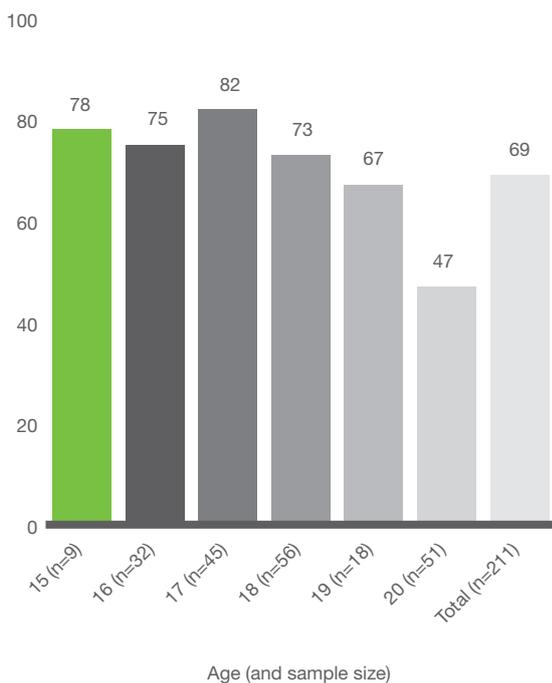
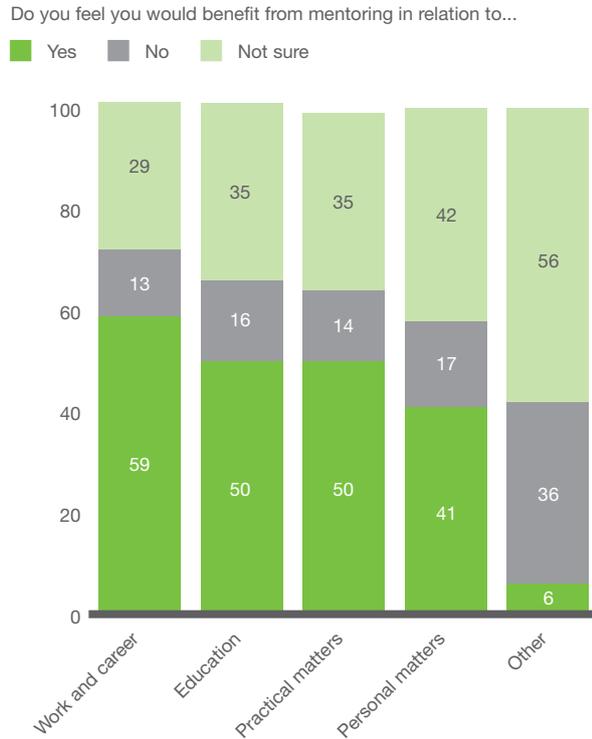


Figure 3.8: Proportion of young people who feel they would benefit from mentoring over the coming 12 months by topic/focus of mentoring (%)



n=208

As seen in Table 3.1, interest in mentoring is much higher among 15 to 18-year-olds than 19 to 20-year-olds, particularly with regard to mentoring for work and career planning (72 per cent versus 31 per cent) and education (62 per cent versus 24 per cent). Young men also showed greater interest than women in work and career mentoring (64 per cent versus 55 per cent), but less interest in mentoring for personal matters (34 per cent versus 45 per cent).

The fact that such a high proportion of the sample believe that mentoring could benefit them with work and career matters indicates the profound potential of mentoring programs to support young people.

Table 3.1: Proportion of young people who feel they would benefit from mentoring over the coming 12 months by topic/focus of mentoring, age and sex

		15-18	19-20	Female	Male	Total
I feel I would benefit from mentoring in relation to...	Work and career planning	72%	31%	55%	64%	59%
	Education	62%	24%	47%	53%	50%
	Practical matters	57%	36%	52%	48%	50%
	Personal matters	44%	34%	45%	34%	41%
Total		77%	52%	68%	69%	69%

Strengthening families

The research provides evidence of the importance of family members to young people facing challenges and choices—particularly their parents.

In this context, Wesley Mission service providers have pointed out the potential for mentoring programs to extend beyond the one-to-one relationship, and involve parents and other family members where appropriate.

The Aunties & Uncles program, for example, involves a young person’s parents from the outset, in order to strengthen their degree of buy-in and involvement. This is critical when the mentee is a child, but it is an approach that may benefit other youth mentoring programs.

The literature provides strong evidence that supportive parents have a significant impact on a young person’s level of engagement in school, potential for academic success, level of self-reported happiness during the school-to-work transition, and their capacity for resilience in facing life’s broader challenges (Dockery, 2010; Foundation for Young Australians, 2010; Wesley Mission, 2007). Specifically, parents’ engagement in their children’s schoolwork is recognised as a potentially positive influence on a young person’s academic success (Thomson & Hilman, 2010).

This suggests that supporting parents to better support their children as a core element of the mentoring program (where appropriate) has the potential to enhance the positive impact of the mentoring relationship.

Perhaps a peer

The research provides strong evidence of the importance of friendships to a young person seeking advice and guidance (see Figure 3.3). In fact, young people who have experienced mentoring through Wesley Mission’s programs are just as likely to turn to their friends as their parents for guidance with big decisions.

Their sense of connectedness through school-based peer networks, for example, has a significant impact on school retention and engagement rates (Gray & Hackling, 2009).

In this context, peer-to-peer mentoring approaches, which are modelled on the concept of providing the young person with a supportive older friend, are known to provide particular benefits.

Wesley Mission’s Vision Valley camp fosters informal one-on-one mentoring-style relationships between young people and camp co-ordinators/youth workers. The Big Brothers Big Sisters program, which pairs a young person with an older youth, and the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, which partners a volunteer university student with a high school Indigenous student, have reported successes. The latter has achieved its specific goals of improving Year 10 completion rates, Year 12 completion rates and university admission rates for participating students.



Chapter 4

Mentoring matters

matters

mentoring



Chapter 4: Mentoring matters

The results suggest that, for the most part, mentor selection and training is hitting the mark. All mentees described their mentors as wise, understanding, trustworthy, safe and easy to relate to. In addition, they were seen as interested in them, genuine and fun to be with.

Personal experience

Knowing what we do about the pressures and challenges young people face over their future education, training and employment, it is clear that mentoring must be properly targeted to individual needs.

Some young people want guidance in career planning and goal-setting, whereas others will need more day-to-day support.

In seeking to tailor these approaches, service providers have much to learn about young people's exposure to mentoring, what it means to them, and how they perceive the mentoring relationship.

Awareness and experience of mentoring among youth

Most young people (87 per cent) have heard of mentoring, but based on their understanding of what it is, only 27 per cent say they have had a mentor themselves (see Figure 4.1).

Young people's understanding of mentoring is generally associated with "informal mentoring"—the supportive one-on-one relationships, as opposed to structured mentoring programs.

Some identified these formal mentors as being in the family: parents (10 per cent of all young people), older siblings and cousins (six per cent) and extended family members (six per cent) account for two in five of the mentors identified.

More often though, mentors were people outside the family like teachers (11 per cent); older friends (eight per cent); family friends (three per cent); people from faith-based groups (two per cent); community and youth workers (one per cent), parents of their friends (one per cent), and sporting coaches (one per cent). Curiously, three young people said they had been mentored by a public personality they admire or follow (eg radio DJ, elite sportsperson, musician, actor, blogger etc).

Close to 45 per cent of the mentee sample had been mentored through Aunties & Uncles, a Wesley Mission early intervention mentoring program for children who face social and emotional challenges. The remainder had participated in a variety of Wesley Mission programs where mentoring had been a feature, including through employment services and youth outreach services (see Figure 4.2).

Most mentees (68 per cent) had only had one mentor; those with multiple mentors were asked to focus on the relationship with their most recent mentor. Four in five respondents (79 per cent) reported that this mentoring relationship was still ongoing (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1: Exposure to and experience of mentoring (%)

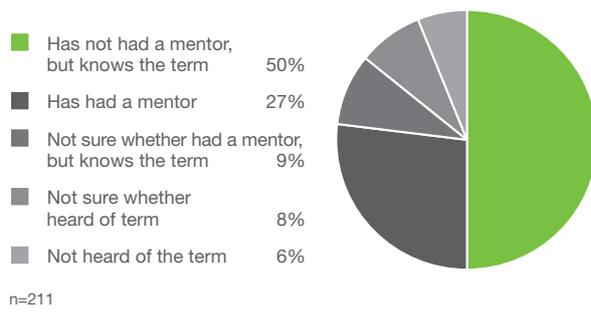
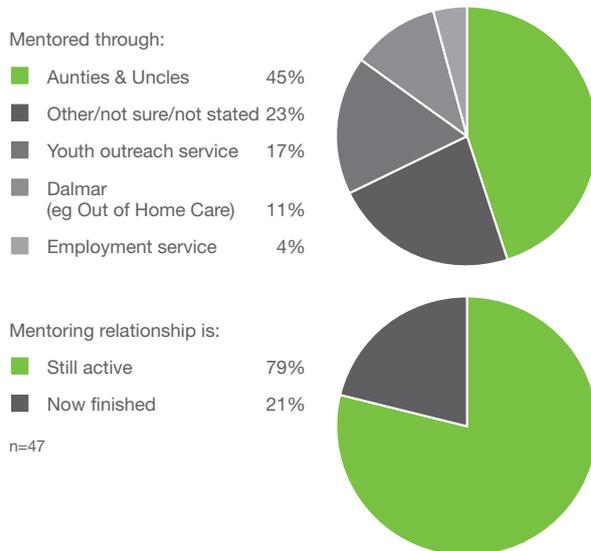


Figure 4.2: Participation in mentoring programs (%)



Young people’s understanding of mentoring is generally associated with “informal mentoring” — the supportive one-on-one relationships, as opposed to structured mentoring programs.

Chapter 4: Mentoring matters

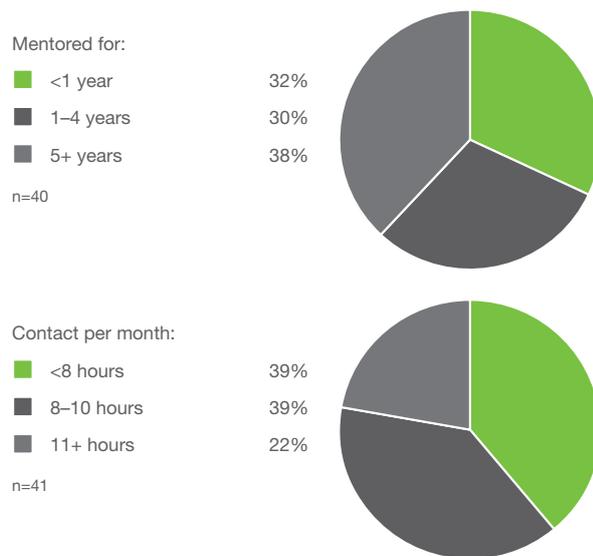
Across the total sample, the typical mentoring relationship had been in place for three years and three months and involved eight hours of (mostly face-to-face) contact per month (see Figure 4.3). However, the range around these median figures was quite large:

- the newest mentoring relationship had only been in place for three weeks; the longest was 15 years
- the minimum contact reported was less than one hour per month; the most contact was 56 hours a month (close to two hours every day).

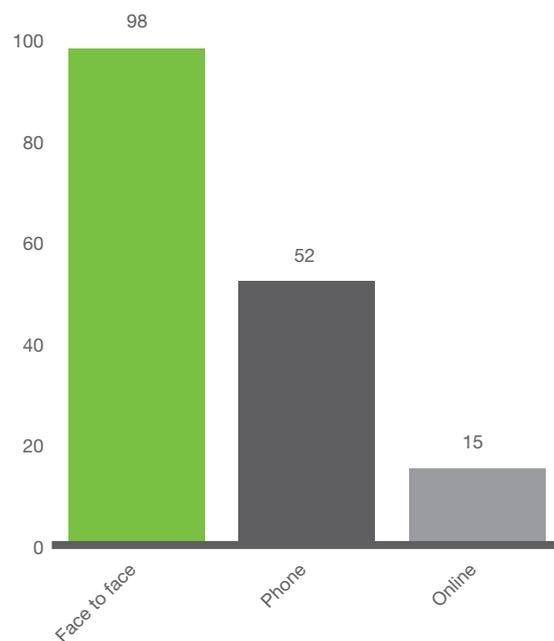
Research among Wesley Mission mentees illustrates the longevity of many relationships, with two in five having been in the relationship for more than five years, and one in five having been in the relationship for between one and four years (see Figure 4.3).

Frequent contact is also reported, with 40 per cent having more than eight hours contact with their mentor monthly, and a further 40 per cent having eight to 10 hours of contact monthly. For a 20 per cent, contact is as much as 11 or more hours a month. This contact is mainly face-to-face, although more than half also reported phone contact. Just 15 per cent used online modes of contact.

Figure 4.3: Duration, intensity and mode of most recent mentoring relationship (%)



Modes of contact used as part of the mentoring relationship:



n=46 (note: multiple responses allowed)

A friend in need

Among the general population surveyed those who said they had heard the term mentoring (n=183) were asked to explain what they would expect from a mentoring relationship.

Overwhelmingly, respondents associated mentoring with the provision of guidance/advice/direction (43 per cent) and help/support (28 per cent):

“Talking to someone who would listen to you about you goals and what you want to achieve. Having that mentor then share their thoughts and knowledge about their life and helping me to use that advice in my goals. They may be able to introduce me to new things and people who may be able to help me.”

“Somebody who will give you constructive criticism and positive guidance. Someone you can trust and someone who can help you to achieve.”

“Someone I respect who has positive ideas and would help me achieve my goals.”

“Respect and encouragement to achieve one’s personal best.”

“Someone you admire and look up to and would like to grow up to be like.”

“I have a mentor at my school. He is a PE teacher. He listens and gives positive feedback. He also helps with any problems at school and with assignments. He listens when I complain about my mum.”

“A friend first of all. Confidentiality and advice. Someone that doesn’t pester me all the time. When I need to talk to them is fine. A good rapport with them is essential as well.”

“A friend that doesn’t judge you.”

Just over half (53 per cent) mentioned one or more aspect of mentoring that is consistent with good practice. This includes expectations of mentoring as a relationship where the mentor:

- is a skilled listener who the young person can “bounce ideas off” (10 per cent)
- is respectful, trustworthy and able to “draw alongside” the young person (seven per cent)
- allows the young person to set the agenda, helps them make their own decisions (11 per cent)
- draws on their own life experience, is able to give a “different perspective” (14 per cent)
- is inspiring and motivating (four per cent) and/or a role model (seven per cent)
- keeps an eye out for the young person and is “there when you need them” (seven per cent)
- also benefits from the mentoring relationship (one per cent).

Describing mentoring in these “good practice” terms was more common among those who had had a mentor (61 per cent) than those who hadn’t (47 per cent).

Meanwhile, 17 per cent of young people understood mentoring as “passive receivership”, describing it in terms of teaching, learning, skills transfer, knowledge acquisition or the mentor “imparting” something. This definition of mentoring is inconsistent with what the literature would describe as “good practice” ie an active, collaborative partnership.

Only two per cent said they were unsure what a mentoring relationship would involve, and one young person said they would expect a negative outcome:

“[I would expect] interference and paternalism— [mentoring] stinks.”

The expected application or focus of mentoring is quite varied. Some young people spoke of general life decisions, choices and goals (16 per cent), while others saw it as specifically applying to problem solving (nine per cent), personal growth or development (four per cent) or work/educational settings (seven per cent). However, most young people did not offer a specific focus in their response.

The range of responses among the general youth population sample may reflect the varying contexts in which mentoring programs are implemented. These include specific careers-focused programs through education institutions or workplaces, informal advice and guidance provided by family or more generalised support through community networks or faith-based institutions.

A sense of connection

In terms of personal connection, encouragingly, nearly half reported a fairly strong (49 per cent) or very strong (42 per cent) “personal connection” with their mentor (see Figure 4.4). This indicates that the processes by which a mentor is “matched” with a mentee are mostly successful.

These findings are important given strong evidence that a young person’s sense of connection with his or her mentor is critical to the longevity of the relationship and its potential to achieve benefits.

Mentors who display genuine interest, acceptance and respect for their mentee, particularly during the early phase of the relationship, are most likely to achieve positive outcomes over the long term (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009).

Characteristics of a mentor

“He’s not the kind of person to put other people down. Unless you really make a mistake. Like once I’d really f*#@d up his computer accidentally. It got a virus and he’s like: ‘Aw yeah, you idiot’. Even then he said it in a light-hearted way. He wasn’t that serious about it. He’s always making everything less serious—light-hearted.”

In seeking to better respond to young people’s needs through mentoring, the research also sought insights into the personal qualities that young people value in a mentor.

The results suggest that, for the most part, mentor selection and training is hitting the mark. All mentees described their mentors as being wise, understanding, trustworthy, safe and easy to relate to (see Figure 4.5). All but one added that the mentor was interested in them, genuine and fun to be with.

Only a handful took issue with the mentor’s character, noting them to be controlling (n=6) or judgmental (n=1).

Mentees responding online (n=32) were asked to describe in their own words the “most important characteristics a mentor needs to have”. The most commonly identified characteristics were:

- being friendly, nice, kind (18 mentions) and easy to relate to (eight)
- being fun, funny, cool (13) or otherwise being an interesting person (two)
- being a good listener/communicator (10)
- being non-judgemental and easy going (nine), understanding (six) and patient (seven).

Figure 4.4: Level of personal connection with mentor (%)

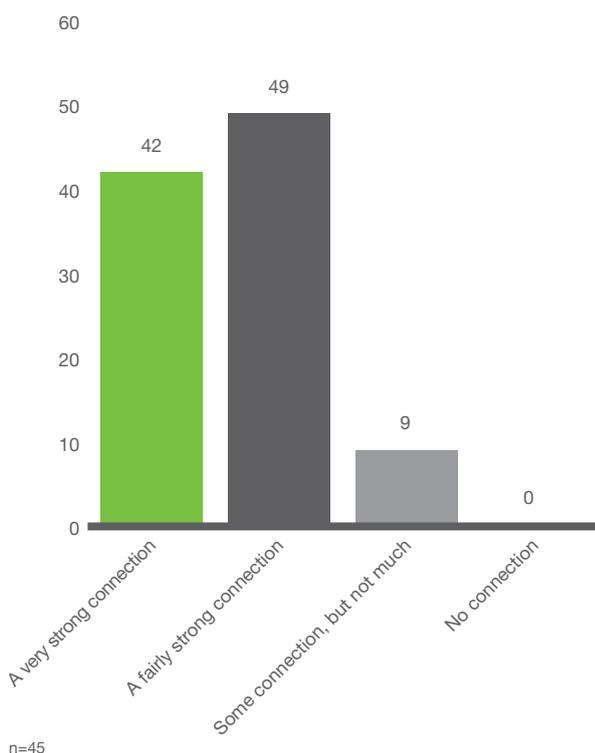
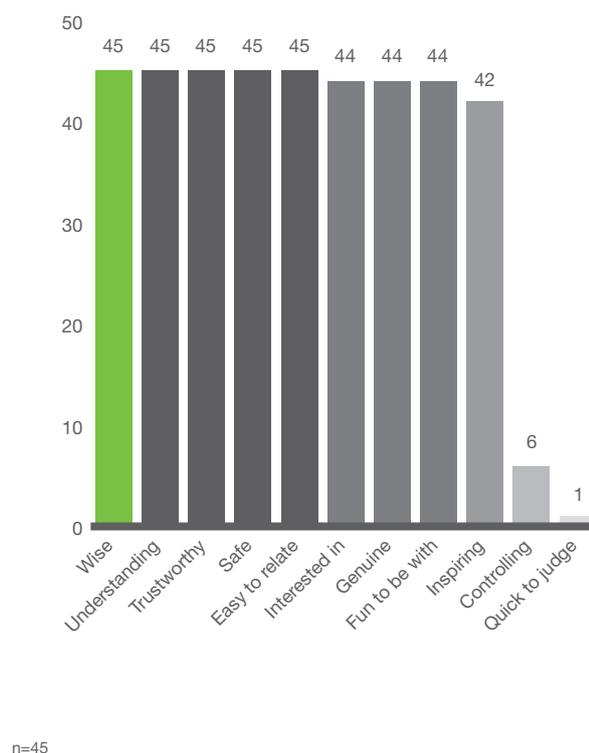


Figure 4.5: Mentor characteristics (%)



As two young people put it:

“Kind, fun, understanding and stuff like that. Nice people who care about kids. I want to be an Uncle to a kid one day. Not look down on you or your mum, like some people do.”

“He knows how to take control and get things done. He’s a real goofball. He’s a great guy. He’s just fun; he jokes around.”

Other important aspects (mentioned by fewer mentees) included:

- being smart, able to solve problems (four)
- being honest, genuine, trustworthy, reliable (four)
- being caring (three), helpful (one), supportive/encouraging (three and generally taking a positive outlook on life (two)
- being able to draw on life experience (two), being spiritually mature (two)
- being physically fit (one).



A young person’s sense of connection with his or her mentor is critical to the longevity of the relationship and its potential to achieve benefits.

The age of the mentor was only mentioned by one mentee, who preferred a mentor close to his age.

The literature provides evidence of the importance of particular personal qualities in the mentor being critical to the success of the relationship. The importance of “fun” in the relationship is well evidenced. Above all, authenticity and empathy are fundamental.

A recent global survey of 7,000 youth found that authenticity (represented as “truthfulness” and “genuineness”) is one of the top qualities young people value most in their friends—truthfulness far outranking all other qualities (McCann Worldgroup, 2011).

A young person’s relationship with a mentor with these qualities has been found to have positive impacts on other personal relationships in the young person’s life. This is attributed to the impact of the experience of the mentoring relationship on their socio-emotional development—an important outcome of mentoring among young people deemed to be “at risk” (Thomson, Zand & Zand, 2010).



Mentoring gave Heath a 'normal childhood'

If you were looking for someone to personify the benefits of mentoring, you'd be hard pressed to go past Heath Ducker. When Heath joined Wesley Mission's Aunties & Uncles mentoring program at eight, he wasn't exactly going off the rails, but the chances were good.



Mentoring gave Heath a 'normal childhood'

Heath was the second oldest of 10 children, from four different fathers, living in a chaotic housing commission home in Parramatta with his single mum. At 11, he was sexually molested by a friend's father. Heath didn't actually meet his real dad until he was 20.

Today, at 29, this sad picture couldn't be more different. Heath is, quite simply, a legend. He's a lawyer, has published a book about his life, is a tennis player, ice skater and surfer, and has received multiple awards and national recognition for his community service.

Kevin Rudd wrote of Heath's book "it is unusual to read a story that is so confrontingly real and yet so profoundly uplifting".

Heath attributes a large proportion of his success to mentoring by his "auntie and uncle", Cathy and Alan.

"Mentoring gave my life some structure in the midst of chaos, helped build my self-confidence, made me feel loved and showed me another world to aspire to," he said.

Heath doesn't in any way disparage his upbringing by his emotionally fragile mother, but the family situation was simply unmanageable and she was overwhelmed:

"There was nowhere to do homework, it was always noisy. I realise now that we were probably undernourished sometimes, when the only thing for dinner was cereal. We had no money, and everything was broken. My older brother nearly ended in juvenile detention, and I never had the feeling that I was the focus of anyone's love. I'd see other kids at school and hear about their lives and realise that mine wasn't too flash."

Heath's book, *A Room at the Top* refers to the fact that, as a child he would escape to the roof of his home to seek some peace to read books, sometimes by torchlight.

As an eight-year-old in primary school, Heath remembers himself as introverted and lacking in self-confidence. And, while he didn't consider himself a bad kid, he was mixing with some who were.

Heath's mother had already sought assistance from community organisations with most of her children (two others were already involved with Aunties & Uncles) and it was around this time that she approached Aunties & Uncles to help him.

Heath agreed to start a mentoring relationship with Alan and Cathy, a couple who didn't have any children of their own. From that point, a new world opened up for the young boy.

"I didn't recognise it at the time but what I was starting to have with them, and especially with Alan, was a normal childhood with a proper mum and dad," he said.

"They made sure I learned my times tables, ate proper meals and brushed my teeth. I watched them and learned how to wash and iron clothes.

"They introduced me to their friends and I'd go to barbecues and family gatherings and they all became part of my extended family.

"Alan got me involved in soccer and then drama classes. He also used to take me with him to work sometimes. As you can imagine, I really looked forward to my weekend visits."

Alan and Cathy later supported the 13-year-old Heath through a traumatic court case which saw the man who had sexually abused him some years earlier sent to prison.

In his final year at high school, Heath actually lived with Alan and Cathy during the week so that he could concentrate on his HSC studies.

Through his relationship with his auntie and uncle, Heath saw that healthy relationships were possible.

"When you feel loved and settled, and are encouraged to value yourself, it gives you the foundation to form good relationships," he said.

Among the healthy relationships in his life today is the one he still maintains with Alan and Cathy whom he still talks to regularly, 12 years after they stopped being his formal "auntie and uncle".

Heath has been keen to share his story about the benefits of mentoring experience. He was the subject of an episode of the ABC's *Australian Story* in 2006 and was later approached to write a book.

"Through the book, I wanted people to understand that there is real disadvantage in a country where many people think we have a level playing field," Heath said.

"Sure, there are opportunities to advance, but a lot of kids have to make up so much ground before they even reach the starting line."

Heath was asked to join the board of Aunties & Uncles in 2007 to contribute his legal knowledge and experiences, and he has also had a long-term professional involvement with another youth program.

At some point he also plans to mentor a child.

"I already pass on some of the things I learned to my younger brothers and sisters but I'll get involved in a more structured program," he said. 



Chapter 5

Building confidence, restoring esteem

restoring esteem



Chapter 5: Building confidence, restoring esteem

Effective matching and long-term commitment from the mentor—ideally for more than 12 months—is essential to developing a strong and trusted base of support for the young person, which ultimately provides them with a safe space to explore and strive to achieve their full potential.

Empowerment

“Our current youth model follows a strengths-based, goal-oriented approach. It involves letting them set and evaluate their goals and priorities, and working with that. For example, someone might come into the program with a goal to be in their own home and get a job. If they’re drinking and partying every night, we remind them of their goal.

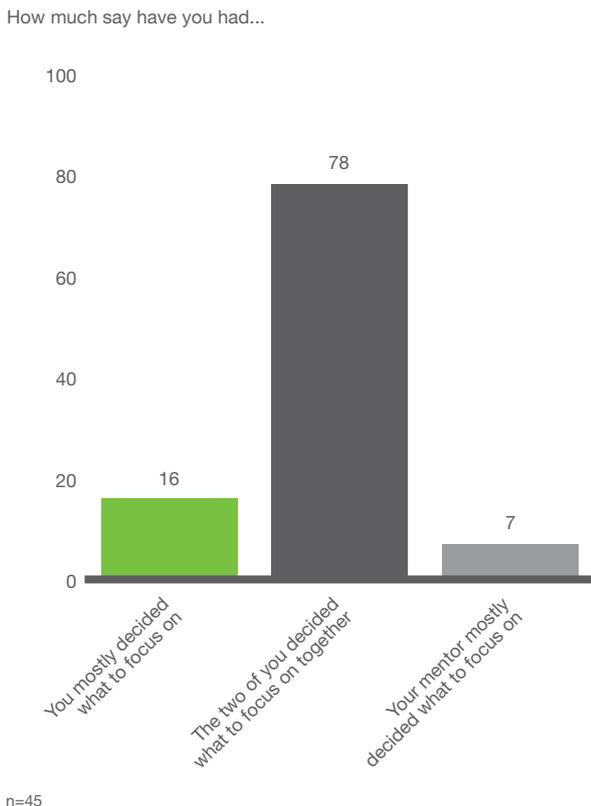
It’s about being a significant person in their lives and celebrating their success.” (Wesley Mission service provider)

While mentoring may offer young people an important source of advice and guidance, research highlights the critical importance of the relationship being founded on empowering young people to make their own choices—effectively supporting them to support themselves.

It is important for mentoring approaches to recognise that success means different things to different people and there is strong evidence to support the critical importance of allowing young people to “own” the focus of the relationship (Karcher, Herrera & Hansen, 2010). This strengthens the relationship and also enhances the mentees’ sense of control, which the literature indicates is highly effective in achieving sustainable, positive outcomes over the long term (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010).

It is pleasing to see, then, that almost all mentees in this survey (90 per cent) felt they had been active in shaping the direction and focus of their mentoring relationship. This was mostly by agreeing on the focus in discussion with their mentor (74 per cent), although 16 per cent said that the focus had mostly been of their making (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Who set the mentoring agenda? (%)



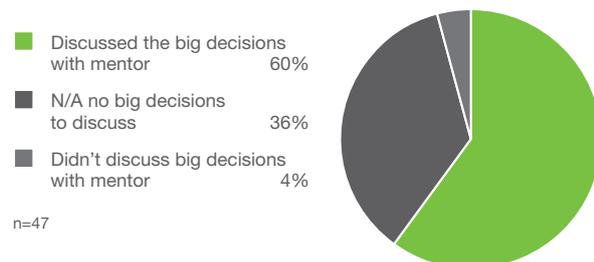
Big decisions

The survey of those who had been mentored shows that when a young person has a mentor, they are highly likely to make use of them when facing big decisions.

Some 30 of the 47 mentees surveyed reported that, during their relationship with their mentor, they had to make some “big decisions” about education, work or other things that were important to them (eg personal or practical matters) (see Figure 5.2).

All but two (28 of 30) reported discussing this decision with their mentor, eclipsing any other source of support (refer to Figure 3.6 in Chapter 3).

Figure 5.2: Mentor characteristics (%)



Moreover, all but one of the remaining respondents said that, if they had such a decision to make, they would discuss it with their mentor.

Among those who consulted the mentor about their decision, half said that their mentoring relationship had been “very important” in making this decision, with most others (39 per cent) describing the mentoring relationship as “fairly important”.

Moreover, no-one was disappointed with what they got from their mentor in this regard. In fact, all 28 of the mentees said that their mentor had been “very helpful” with this decision. This is a very positive finding.

The top three reasons for why mentors had been so helpful were:

- giving good advice
- listening to the mentee
- being encouraging and supportive.

Sharing relevant personal experiences and seeking to guide but not instruct were also referred to as key helpful qualities of the mentor.

Others included:

- helping rethink the problem, and see options and possibilities they had not considered
- helping solve pressing problems
- sharing their own life experience
- helping make their own decision
- introducing them to other people and activities that might support the direction they wanted to go in
- helping better understand themselves and their strengths.

The following quotes from young people illustrate some of these points:

(My mentor was very helpful because ...)

“She gave advice about what she would recommend for her own kids if they were in the same situation.”

“He gave some advice and told me what decisions he made when he was younger.”

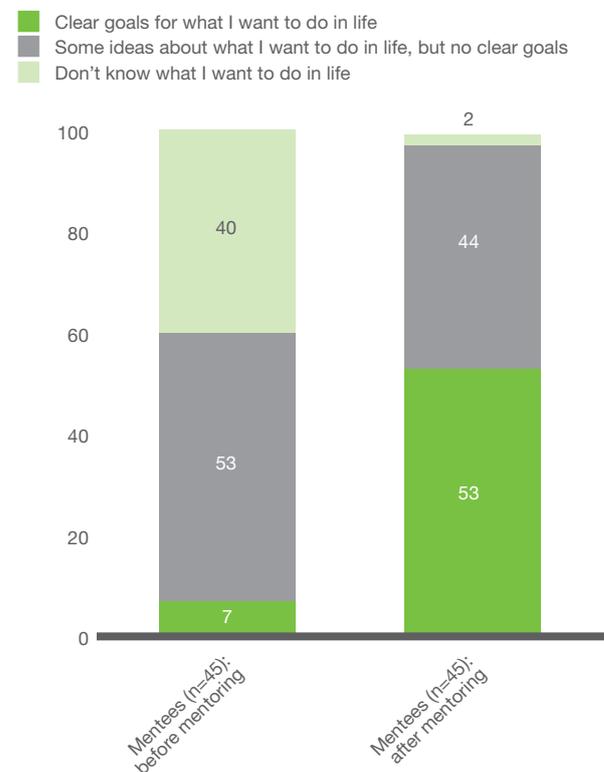
“He helped me come to a logically considered decision on what I should do but ultimately left the choice to me.”

Achieving clarity

Perhaps the most significant finding of the research, in the context of supporting young people at school and in their transitions to future career paths, is the impact of mentoring on clarifying young people’s dreams and ambitions.

Just seven per cent of those surveyed had clear goals in that regard prior to entering the mentoring relationship—53 per cent had some ideas but no clear goals. After mentoring, however, more than half reported having clear goals, and three in four reported having some ideas (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Presence and clarity of life goals, before and after mentoring (%)



Chapter 5: Building confidence, restoring esteem

Looking at this another way, four in 10 young people who had no idea about what they wanted to do in life before mentoring, only two per cent still did not know after having been in a mentoring relationship.

For around one in four young people who had experienced a mentoring relationship, their goals remained much the same.

Yet for the majority—around three in four—their clarity about their goals improved as a result of mentoring, and almost a third reported that their goals had become bigger and more ambitious. For many (38 per cent), their goals were different yet no more ambitious, and the majority (77 per cent) reported that their plans had become more realistic (see Figures 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6).

These findings strongly support the existing body of evidence that mentoring is a highly effective means of helping some young people at risk to make more informed choices about their education and work pathways (Carbines, Wyatt & Robb, 2007).

Building confidence

“It definitely changes what I thought about myself. I used to think ‘I’m not good at anything’, and stuff like that. So yeah, he helped change that ‘cause he’s always encouraging me to do things.”

(mentee)

“They’ve made me more confident. They’re always lifting me up and saying: ‘You’re really good at this. Go do it!’ And he’s really taught me what it’s like once you’ve left school: what’s going to happen and how to deal with things as an adult.”

(mentee)

Mentee were asked to indicate whether, “as a consequence of their mentoring relationship, various aspects of their life had improved, remained stable or worsened.” Respondents were given the choice of opting out on the grounds that the matter was “not relevant to me”.

The results here are very positive (see Figure 5.7). All but one mentee reported an overall positive impact from their mentoring relationship: 82 per cent “very positive impact” and 16 per cent “some positive impact, but not much”.

Figure 5.4: Change in clarity about goals (%)

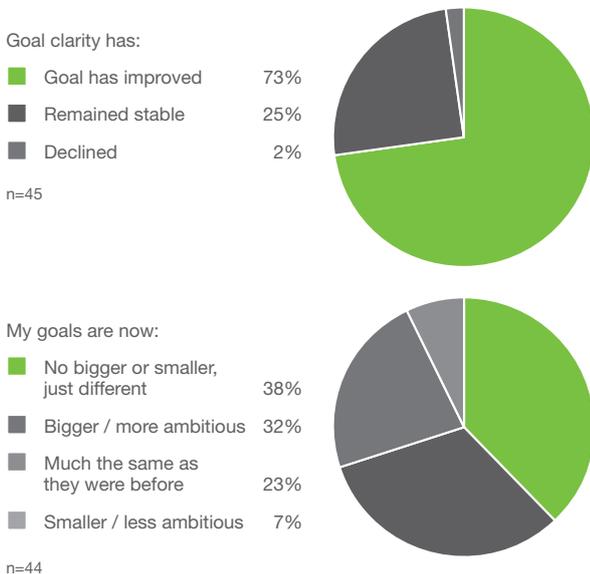
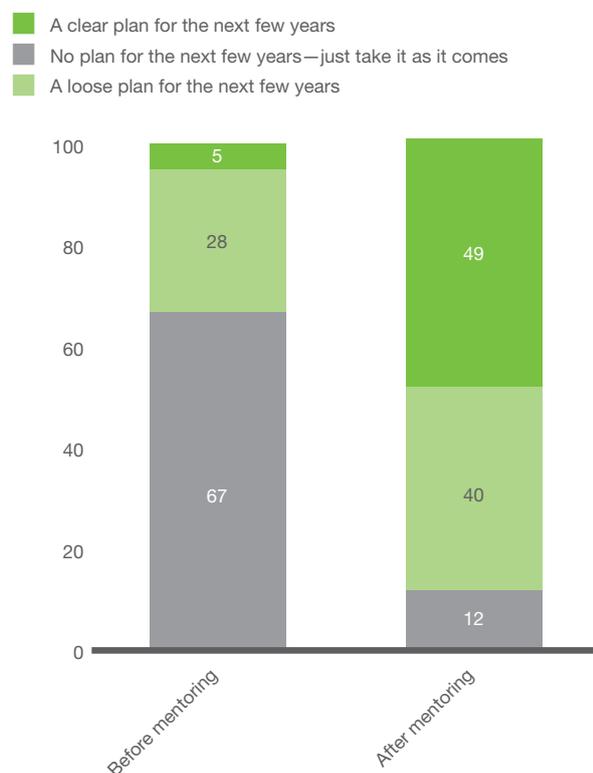


Figure 5.5: Presence and clarity of plans for the next few years, before and after mentoring (%)



None reported a negative impact, and only a handful identified anything that could have been done differently to make their mentoring relationship more helpful.

Only one mentee suggested a change on the part of the mentors or program administration. This young person would have preferred the mentoring relationship to last longer.

The other mentees who saw room for improvement said they would have derived more benefit if they had put in more effort.

“[I could have] been more committed to it.”

“[I could have] spent more time with her—I did go some school holidays, but I could have gone more often.”

“[I could have] paid more attention to what they had to say.”

These results suggest strong positive potential of mentoring on young person’s capacity for self-reflection, personal attitudes and relationships.

“Last year I went to boarding school and I got into a lot of really stupid stuff, like really, really stupid. And every time I did it, like every time I had a smoke or something, I’d always think: ‘What would [Aunt] and [Uncle] think?’ This is awful. Not about my mum, not about my sister, not about my brothers—it was always about [Aunt] and [Uncle]. I was like ‘I can’t ever let them find out about this. I’d feel really guilty’.”

Overall, the findings are well aligned with the objective of Wesley Mission’s youth services to focus on providing client-centred programs that see the mentor as a “friend” rather than a “teacher or preacher”.

Figure 5.6: Change in clarity about plans (%)

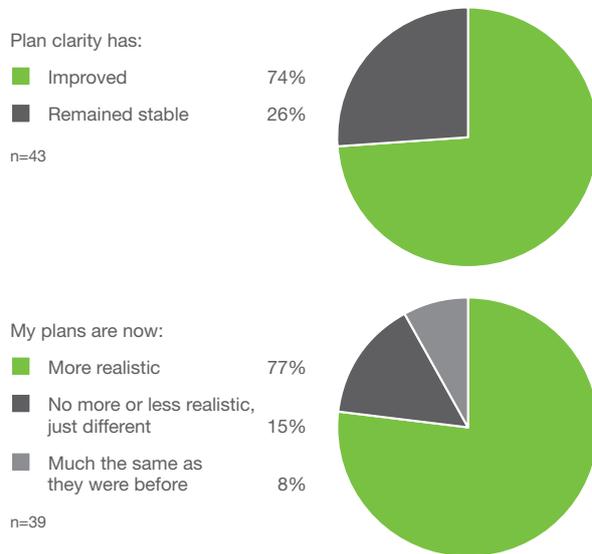
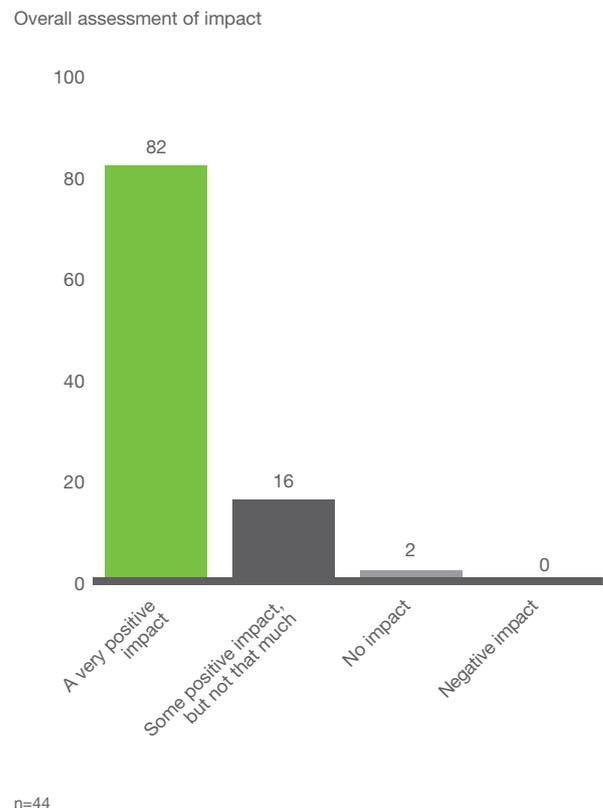


Figure 5.7: Overall impact of the mentoring relationship (%)



Impact on life outcomes

In seeking to understand the longer-term impact of the mentoring relationship, young people from Wesley Mission's programs were questioned on a range of specific outcomes.

The results illustrate the personally transformative potential of mentoring, and young people's recognition of its impact on their lives (see Figure 5.8).

In terms of self-reported impact on personal capacity and self-efficacy, it is important to note that the most significant reported one was enhanced self-esteem. Four out of five mentees reported that their self-esteem had improved as a direct result of the relationship.

This is a particularly significant finding given the evidence that healthy self-esteem is associated with good psychological and interpersonal function, and has been implicated in outcomes as diverse as life satisfaction, safe relationships, academic achievement, stable employment and mental health (Croker & Park, 2004; Kentis, 2005).⁴

Other key findings of the research include:

- all except three mentees (93 per cent) benefited in some way from their mentoring relationship. The average number of positive outcomes per mentee was 4.6
- a total of 65 per cent reported that they took more responsibility for their actions as a result of mentoring. This supports strong evidence in the literature of mentoring's potential impact on personal attitudes and behaviour.
- most other positive outcomes were reported by between half and two thirds of mentees. This includes outcomes relating to educational attainment (65 per cent); quality of relationships (65 per cent), employment prospects (59 per cent); reduction in anti-social behaviour (58 per cent); coping with life's problems (58 per cent), and making choices about smoking, drinking and drugs (56 per cent).
- the one positive outcome that stands out as being less common is attendance at school—two-thirds (68 per cent) said this had stayed "about the same".

Mentees were also given space to note any other positive outcomes from mentoring that had not been covered by the above questioning.

Importantly, a number of young people referred to the impact on facing challenges at school. These included self-confidence to face these challenges, as well as practical help with assignments and homework—even literacy.

"School, homework and assignments are less stressful."

"I can do maths more easily now because they helped me a lot with my maths homework."

"I'm doing so much better at school! I feel better about myself and marks."

These particular results illustrate the potential of mentoring to achieve positive impacts in terms of young people's academic attainment and their desire and ability to remain engaged in education.

The most commonly mentioned "other" outcomes related to specific skills that had been learned, for example:

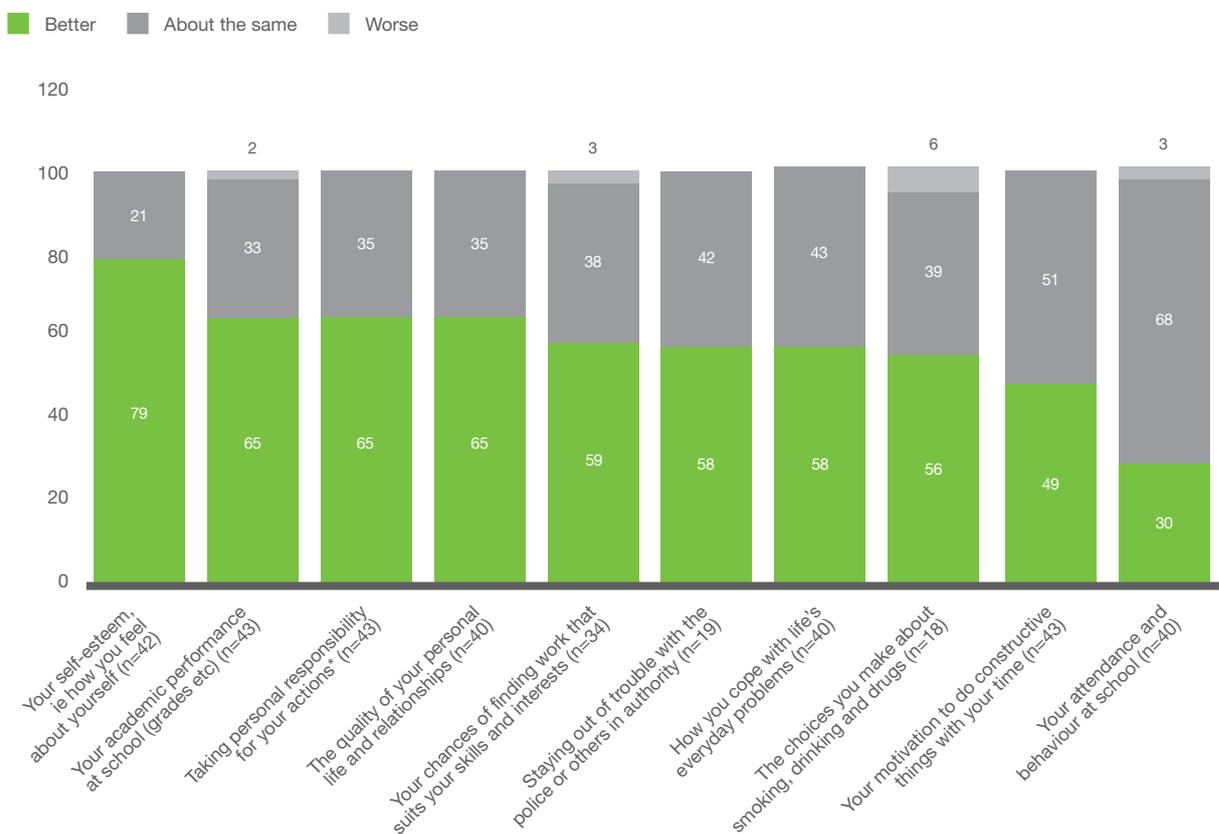
- literacy: "I learned to read"
- driving: "he taught me to drive and I got my licence"
- cooking: "I can cook some things now because she taught me"
- art: "I learned interesting things such as learning more about art"
- sporting skills: "I can kick a football better"; "he taught me how to do a slide tackle in soccer".

4. Croker & Park (2004) note that "boosts to state self-esteem tend to follow from success in the domains in which self-worth is invested". They and others caution that high self-esteem is no silver bullet for at-risk young people, and that the pursuit of self-esteem can carry certain risks.

A small number of young people also detailed:

- altered goals and ambitions: “They make me want to make something of my life”; “I’ve grown more as a person, [have a] clearer look at life; I’m happier about my life and direction”
- specific character changes: “I’m more outgoing now”; “I’m able to make decisions that are considerate for everyone involved”
- specific lifestyle changes: “I’m more active”
- specific relationships that were healthier: “I don’t fight with my sister anymore”; “My friendship choices are better”
- other outcomes: “they made me feel better about my skin condition”.

Figure 5.8: Life outcomes from mentoring (%)



*The question about 'taking personal responsibility' had a different scale (more/about the same/less), but is included here for the sake of comparison.

Chapter 5: Building confidence, restoring esteem

The following quotes illustrate the complex interaction of effects and outcomes, and reveal some of the personal stories behind the mentoring relationships—from mentees who have been through the Aunties & Uncles program:

“I was able to have a break from my mum and the problems at home. My ‘auntie’ is like someone I go to when I don’t want to worry mum. Mum’s problems are big and she can’t listen or help me, but my ‘auntie’ always can. She never lets me down and always is there for me.”

“I have a job. I can drive a car. And I want to work as a policeman in a few years. My ‘uncle’ is a policeman and he is helping me with this. My ‘auntie’ cares for me. I know my mum loves me but she has a drink and drug problem. I stayed with my ‘auntie’ and ‘uncle’ for a long time when I was younger. DoCS didn’t take me away because of them. I had a safe place to go. Even when I stuffed up.”

“I was pretty mischievous at home. I was pretty cunning and when things didn’t work for me at home you know I’d just manipulate things and stuff. Looking back it’s like I learnt that I can’t do that in other places and maybe that’s a quality in me I should change.”

These findings are aligned with literature, including research into the self-reported impacts of the US-based Big Brothers Big Sisters program. This study found that the mentor relationship had been very important to them and “contributed significantly to the person they are today” (Harris Interactive, 2009). Specifically:

- nine in 10 said their mentor “made them feel better about themselves and provided them with stability when they needed it”
- four in five said their mentor “changed their perspective on what they thought possible in life”
- more than three quarters (77 per cent) “set higher goals than they would have on their own”
- around four in five (65 per cent) said their mentor “helped them reach a higher level of education than they ever thought was possible” and more than half agreed their mentor had “kept them from dropping out of high school”.

Many of the former mentees kept in touch with their mentor into adulthood.

The best of the best

Through the research, mentees were asked to share the “one most helpful thing” their mentor had done with them or said to them. The responses—a selection of which are provided below—show a pattern consistent with the “key characteristics of mentors” (refer to Figure 4.5) and how often mentors were “very helpful” for mentees’ big decisions (see Figure 5.2).

Active listening, spending time, committed for the long term

“Just spending time with me.”

“He listened to me.”

“Just been someone different to talk to, with a different outlook on life.”

“Will always be here, no matter what.”

“He comes and watches me play soccer.”

Offering practical advice and assistance

“Taught me to read and help me get my school certificate.”

“Try to treat other people like you want to be treated.”

“Taught me right and wrong.”

“Got me out of the house and meeting new people.”

“Helping me with career choice.”

Unconditional and non-judgmental acceptance

“They love me.”

“It’s okay to be yourself.”

“He said to me that I wasn’t dumb, I just need to focus on the task at hand.”

“All you have to do is try your best.”

Focusing on positive things—strengths, opportunities and achievements

“That I can achieve my goals.”

“She always said that ‘I can do it.’ I really now believe it. She encouraged me every day and I achieved small goals that led to bigger ones.”

“I can do it. Whatever it is. She believes in me and loves me. I trust her. She helped me with driving too.”

“You’ve done good!”

“Don’t worry about the bad stuff, rather focus on the good stuff in your future.”



Nine in 10 said their mentor “made them feel better about themselves and provided them with stability when they needed it”.



Shirley's gift: broadening Emily's horizons

Like Alice in Wonderland, Emily* has had the experience of entering a whole new world. Emily didn't fall down a rabbit hole like Alice. The catalyst for the 17-year-old high school student from Westmead in Sydney was meeting her mentor, Shirley, several years ago.

*Names and photo changed to protect identity.

Shirley's gift: broadening Emily's horizons

"Among other things, Shirley introduced me to a world of culture and learning that I'd never been exposed to," Emily said.

"We went to the Opera House often, the ballet, theatre, movies, art galleries, the Botanic Gardens, museums and cafes. We went to the zoo, the aquarium, had ferry rides on the Harbour, we even had a little holiday in the Blue Mountains. I loved hearing about her travels and learning about classical music. We also enjoyed doing things like word puzzles and playing Scrabble together.

"It was another reality because up till then a visit to the local library was a big outing for me."

Emily was 12 when she met the then 61-year-old Shirley, who lives in Windsor. Emily had many things in common with the other children who are referred, usually by their parent/s, to Wesley Mission's Aunties & Uncles mentoring program.

She was the eldest of five children living with a single mum who was struggling to provide and care for them. Emily's dad was around sometimes. Several of Emily's siblings had disabilities and sometimes relied on their older sister for care and attention.

"I think mum saw the mentoring thing as a way to get a little respite from all us kids," Emily said (several of her siblings are also involved in the Aunties & Uncles program).

"I was a bit nervous about meeting Shirley but she came across as really nice and interested in me. I didn't really register our age difference—she seemed a bit like a kind grandmother and in fact turned out to be the granny I'd never had."

Since that first meeting, the pair have met at least once a month, apart from those times when ill-health or Shirley's visits to her family overseas have intervened, and in that time they have got to know each other well.

Apart from her cultural education, Emily benefitted in many other ways. Shirley regularly helped her with her homework, showing her how to organise her time and studies and to stop procrastinating. Emily also plans to heed Shirley's advice about taking a gap year in 2012 before applying to join the army (Emily wants to be a combat soldier!).

"Shirley also taught me to trust adults again," Emily said. "When she said she would take me somewhere or be somewhere at a certain time, it always happened."

Like so many other mentors, Shirley herself had been taken under someone's wing as a child and had benefitted immeasurably.

"My childhood was quite difficult and my aunt was actually more significant in my life than my mother, and so mentoring is my chance to do the same for someone else," she said.

Shirley has a busy social life centred on the arts, singing, traveling and teaching French. She also helps with a remedial reading program at the local primary school.

She and the exceptionally bright Emily (who counts criminology among her many interests!) were a good match.

"I've always been 'out there' doing so many things and I saw this lovely, smart kid who was being held back for lack of exposure to new experiences," Shirley said.

"She wasn't disadvantaged in the sense of not having enough food on the table each day or going off the rails at school but through lacking stimulation and attention.

"I saw that she had the potential to shine and I feel like I've been able to make a real difference in Emily's life. She's now into music (plays guitar and some piano), teaches herself languages, has learned to trust adults again, has grown in self-esteem and definitely seems to know where she is going.

"I didn't follow any rule book. The relationship and learning just happened naturally as we became good friends."

Emily graduated from the Aunties & Uncles program when she was 15. However, like many children in a mentoring relationship, still stays in close touch with Shirley who is a frequent visitor to Emily's house where she also gets on very well with the teenager's mum.

"She's really just part of the family now. We catch up about once a month on weekends," Emily said.

Shirley recently took Emily to Canberra to further investigate the opportunities for study at the Australian Defence Force Academy at Duntroon.

At some point Emily wants to be a mentor herself:

"It's helped me so much having Shirley and I'd like to do something for another kid," she said.

"If there's anyone reading this that has the chance to be mentored, then I urge them to grab the opportunity. If you come from a difficult home, it can really give you some stability in your life." 🌱



Chapter 6

Spotlight on mentoring

on mentoring
on mentoring



Chapter 6: Spotlight on mentoring

Personal capacity building is at the heart of the mentoring relationship. Providing a supportive relationship through which a young person can develop their potential is the fundamental aim from which a range of benefits and “transformative goals” will naturally flow.

In seeking to renew the focus on mentoring to support positive transitions among young people, Wesley Mission highlights the following issues that may inform the development of future programs.

Wesley Mission’s research with young people, frontline service providers and policy-makers has provided important learnings in terms of what young people want from mentoring.

Being wise, safe, easy to relate to, understanding and trustworthy were referenced as the personal qualities that young people value, which was common to all interviewed through the research.

In addition, they saw many issues of the relationship as “very helpful,” including:

- listening
- providing advice and guidance on career planning and goal-setting when appropriate
- providing advice and wisdom based on the mentor’s sharing of personal experiences
- being encouraging and supportive
- enabling mentees to make their own choices, while supporting the choices they make
- assisting with practical matters, such as filling out job applications, and providing practical advice on a range of issues
- providing contact to useful support networks, such as may be directly relevant to the mentee’s desired education, training or employment.

The results tell us that the mentoring relationship is best viewed as a “supportive friendship”. This premise is well supported in the context of Wesley Mission’s research among general youth, which shows that while parents are very important role models, young people regularly seek advice and guidance from their friends.

Realising potential

Mentoring impacts on specific factors that are critical for effective transitions. Young people who have been mentored are likely to feel better about themselves; feel more motivated; feel better about their academic performance; may have improved academic performance, and are less likely to leave school early. They are also likely to have improved relationships with their teachers, family and friends (Australian Youth Mentoring Network, 2011; Tierney, Gossman & Resch, 1995).

It is encouraging to find that such a high proportion of young people in general believe they would benefit from a mentoring relationship. Some seven in 10 believed they would benefit from a mentoring relationship over the next 12 months.

The main perceived need for mentoring, as voiced by the young people in the general population, was about work or career planning (eg thinking about their career, finding work, dealing with stressful situations in the workplace etc) and education (picking subjects at school, choosing a course at TAFE or university, managing the stress of assignments and exams etc).

One in two also showed interest in mentoring on practical matters (eg managing their money, getting a driver’s licence, looking after their health) and 40 per cent were interested in help with personal matters (eg family and relationships, making decisions about sex, alcohol, drugs etc).

The fact that young people are open to being supported through mentoring, particularly in terms of work or career planning, is a positive indicator of the potential to expand and further develop programs to better meet their needs.

Timing is everything

The importance of intervening at the right age to support young people's transitions most effectively should not be underestimated. The literature supports early intervention approaches focused on building resilience among children and early teens, with a view to enhancing their long-term prospects (Moodie & Fisher, 2009; Wesley Mission, 2007).

Focusing on potential early school-leavers in Years 9 and 10 (aged 14 to 16) is also critical. There is strong evidence that interventions targeted at young people who are at risk of dropping out of VET at this age, for example, are most effective before and after the precise timing of the transition from school to VET (Masdonati, Lamamra & Jordan, 2010).

The results from Wesley Mission's research support the premise of targeting mentoring approaches to 14 to 16-year-olds. The survey findings indicate that young people in their late teens and 20s are less interested in being mentored. Less than half of 20-year-olds believed that they would benefit from a mentoring relationship, compared with four in five 18-year-olds, and around three quarters of 15 and 16-year-olds.

Motivating force

Motivation is one of the critical driving forces for young people to stay engaged in education and training structures. It is strongly linked to career planning and goal-setting, and a factor influencing students' longer-term life outcomes. Those who see the value of study for their future success are more likely to achieve success (Thomson & Hilman, 2010).

Mentoring is recognised as having a strong positive impact on young people's level of motivation, along with their attitudes and behaviour. This includes taking greater responsibility for their actions and taking more care of others (Pritchard, 2008; Tierney, Gossman & Resch, 1995).

Research conducted with Wesley Mission's mentees supports this premise. Mentoring is particularly effective in this context in that it represents a capacity-building approach. Three quarters of mentees interviewed reported that they and their mentor had decided the focus of the relationship together—a further 16 per cent reporting that they themselves had mostly decided.

In terms of the perceived impacts of the mentoring relationship, around four in six young people reported that they were taking greater personal responsibility for their actions as a result of the relationship. This ranked equal in terms of self-reported impacts to improved academic performance at school.

The whole person

“Mentoring is about stepping back and holding their hand through a particular transition.”

(Wesley Mission service provider)

Personal capacity-building is at the heart of the mentoring relationship. Providing a supportive relationship through which the mentee can develop their potential is the fundamental aim from which a range of benefits and “transformative goals” will naturally flow (Hartley, 2004; Wheeler, Keller & DuBois, 2010; McCallum, Beltman & Palmer, 2005; Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995).

Through focusing on personal development and building self-esteem, the young person is likely to benefit from improved well-being and resilience. This has direct impacts on their likelihood of staying engaged in education and training structures and their ability to make successful school-to-work transitions. This in turn achieves long-term benefits associated with educational attainment, including improved socio-economic status, along with the wider long-term benefits of improved resilience.

The impacts of the person-centred approach to mentoring may also be understood in terms of its potential to positively impact aspects of the young person's character that will affect their future labour market prospects. Personal skills such as the ability to communicate effectively, self-discipline, the ability to commit to long-term goals, and to work effectively in a team are ultimately as important as academic ability in predicting earnings at age (Birdwell, Grist & Margot, 2011).

We know that young people who have a sense of where they want to go after leaving school tend to fare better in the transition to work and further study. And those who complete school have a greater sense of control over their lives in comparison to those who drop out early (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010).

Chapter 6: Spotlight on mentoring

Among the young people surveyed, self-esteem was the most significant of all impacts associated with mentoring: four in five respondents reportedly feel better about themselves as a direct result.

The findings illustrate the importance of mentoring programs being recognised as a medium to long-term intervention, rather than a “quick fix.” The literature suggests that “having fun” and “hanging out” are also essential ingredients in an effective mentoring relationship (Nakkula & Harris, 2010). Certainly, research among Wesley Mission’s mentees supports this premise, with many referring to aspects of the relationship such as “giving me company”, “just spending time with me”, someone with whom “it’s ok just to be yourself”, and someone who “will always be here, no matter what” cited as among the “most helpful things the mentor has done”.

Strengthening structures

The importance of establishing effective structures for the mentoring relationship to blossom is well evidenced in the literature.

Strengthening connections depends on putting in place effective structures, which may involve reviewing screening processes, matching processes and a required time commitment from mentors—both in terms of length of the relationship and frequency of contact.

Aspects of effective structures include:

- sophisticated mentor/ mentee “matching processes,” which may be based on detailed criteria and supported by professional caseworkers, including criteria associated with age, cultural background, gender and personality
- training for mentors, including relationship-building and communication approaches
- well defined boundaries around contact arrangements, which are well understood by both parties
- close case worker monitoring and participation in programs involving community volunteers as mentors
- seeking to involve and establish networks of support with family members (particularly parents) and teachers as an integral element of the mentoring relationship (Carbines, Wyatt & Robb, 2007).

Of all the factors, the longevity of the relationship is recognised as one of the most significant factors for achieving positive outcomes through mentoring (Carbines, Wyatt & Robb, 2007; DuBois & Holloway et al, 2002; Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995).

Research among Wesley Mission mentees illustrates the longevity of many relationships, with two in five having been in the relationship for more than five years. Wesley Mission has evidence that many young people who were mentored through the Aunties & Uncles program stay in touch with their mentor well into their adult lives.

Research conducted among young people in the US-based Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring program (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002) found that relationships that lasted more than a year achieved the most significant self-reported impacts. For relationships that lasted between three months and a year, the shorter the time, the fewer reported impacts. Importantly, relationships that ended shortly after they began had detrimental impacts on the young person.

The literature also indicates the importance of frequent contact to achieve emotional closeness and consequently, better outcomes (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009). This is recognised to be particularly important at the outset of the relationship, particularly the first three months, when barriers to trust need to be overcome. For many young people, the simple fact of a mentor turning up every week has a profound impact, in that it results in the feeling that someone is genuinely invested in their well-being.

Most of the young people surveyed who had experience with Wesley Mission programs had primarily had face-to-face contact (98 per cent). While around half also reported phone-based contact, just 15 per cent had contact using internet-based methods.

Technological potential

The research suggests the potential for technology to be better harnessed to support the connection between mentors and mentees.

Just 15 per cent of the young people mentored through Wesley Mission's programs reported using online modes of contact to keep in touch with their mentor (98 per cent met face-to-face). Yet we know that technology—particularly the internet and mobile communications—are transforming the ways young people connect with their friends.

Recent worldwide research among 7,000 young people aged 16 to 30 (McCann Worldgroup, 2011) found technology to be “revolutionising young people's connections to their friends”. Through social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook their friends are “ever present”. In fact a quarter of the young people surveyed identified the internet as a top source of advice and support, and around 40 per cent identified it as a major source.

Involving the parents

There is strong evidence that mentoring relationships are most effective when they go beyond one-on-one interaction and seek to build networks of support around the young person. Involving family members—particularly parents—along with teachers, case workers and other significant adults in the young person's life is recognised as beneficial in supporting the relationship.

Involving parents in the early stages of the relationship (if appropriate in the context of the young person's family circumstances), as is the case through Wesley Mission's Aunties & Uncles program, may help ensure parents also feel supported rather than threatened. It may also enhance their capacity to better support their own children's development, which the literature shows is critical to young people's academic retention rates and level of attainment. The Big Brother Big Sister Australia program actively seeks to provide services to the family of young people via case management and social and educational workshops (group days).

Research among Wesley Missions youth services providers suggests that there may be scope for youth mentoring programs to involve parents to a greater degree, in part as a means of promoting better parenting skills. The charity's Brighter Futures program works with parents with young children, for example, and a similar model for parents of teenage children may be beneficial to facilitate improved support for young people in transition.

Communities and services

The literature suggests that it is beneficial for mentoring programs focused on supporting young people to engage with teachers and the school community. This is considered to be particularly effective for young people who are disengaging and at risk of dropping out (Pritchard, 2008). There is evidence that energising and engaging the community through a mentoring program can assist schools to find proactive ways to address disengagement (Pritchard, 2008).

Mentoring is also a potentially effective means of building networks of support around the young person's specific needs: the mentor as advocate. This may be effective in cases where the mentor is a professional staff member or case worker.

Research among Wesley Mission service providers suggests that youth mentoring approaches could be further developed in the context of enhancing support for the young person through collaborative networks. There is strong potential for the mentor to act as an advocate for the young person through schools in particular, to support continuing engagement and successful transitions (Birtwell, Grist & Margo, 2011).

Moreover, better co-ordination of services around the young person, initiated by the mentor and involving schools, mainstream services, police and the juvenile justice sector may help avoid situations where “at risk” young people have to “tell their stories” many times.

Wesley Mission services suggested the potential for youth services that run mentoring programs to provide an accessible “hub” for young people. This hub might be in the form of a weekly outreach service at community-based youth centres, where vulnerable young people can seek support from mentors along with mainstream services, welfare organisations and medical professionals.

Chapter 6: Spotlight on mentoring

Finally, involving volunteers from the wider community in youth mentoring programs is recognised as having the potential to bring two-way benefits—not only strengthening support networks around the young person, but at the same time strengthening community cohesiveness (Hartley, 2004; Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995).

Mentoring is shown to have the potential to improve understanding and communication across different age groups and positively focus on young people's skills and contributions to society (Hartley, 2004). It is recognised as an effective means to improving young people's relationships with other family members, peers, and teachers, thereby providing wider social, as well as individual, benefits.

Longer-term outcomes of youth mentoring, including positive impacts on young people's levels of civic participation as adults and in reducing their likelihood of committing crime also foster stronger communities (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995).

Building on success

In seeking to expand the reach of mentoring in supporting young people's transitions, it is important to understand factors for successful mentoring approaches.

Among those delivering mentoring programs for Wesley Mission, the following issues were found to offer the potential to achieve positive outcomes through mentoring:

- facilitating regular contact between mentors and mentees over a sustained period of time
- ensuring programs are based on an understanding of “where young people are at”—for example in providing personal support rather than goal-setting to vulnerable young people who may be “just trying to stay alive”
- ensuring the relationship is well supported by a trained case worker
- enabling the (staff) mentor to advocate for young people with communities and mainstream services.

Harnessing new technologies

New modes of communication, such as internet and mobile communications technologies, offer great potential to further expand ways to reach young people and support them in their struggles.

The Smith Family's iTrack online youth mentoring program, which is targeted at supporting young people's school-to-work transition, may provide a platform from which further programs may be developed. An early study of the program's effectiveness (The Smith Family, 2007), found that students who did not participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors during the program did not appear to be disadvantaged in terms of program outcomes.

Online technologies, such as Skype, and instant messaging services such as Facebook chat, offer a potentially cost-effective way to enhance the mentoring relationship, particularly for young people in rural and remote communities.

Improved monitoring and evaluation

Improved monitoring and evaluation of mentoring approaches and their relative successes will be critical to better supporting young people in the context of their education, training and employment transitions. This will enable interventions to be better targeted, barriers to effective mentoring to be overcome, and the business case for youth mentoring to be better made.

Research conducted in the US (Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota, 2007) proposed a social return on investment (SROI) framework for quantifying the values of youth mentoring, including:

- improved school attendance and performance—leading to higher lifetime earnings
- reduced absenteeism—resulting in reduced school costs in the short-term and increased lifetime earnings
- reduced crime rates among juveniles and adults—with associated reduced social costs
- reduced need for social services, including counselling and longer term social support.

In making the business case for mentoring, we also need to better understand barriers to success, including where mentoring has failed to have a positive impact on the young person, or indeed any self-reported impact at all.

The widespread adoption of recognised best-practice benchmarks would be beneficial in continuing to build on success to date, and to better support young people into the future.

Good practice benchmarks

The following good practice principles were developed by Mentoring Australia, the National Association of Mentors and a number of program operators in 2000. They are intended to guide the development, management and funding of quality mentoring programs in Australia, and may form the basis for a national benchmarking approach:

- a well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
- regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
- establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
- paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills
- written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions
- adherence to Equal Opportunity requirements
- inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and sexuality as appropriate to the program adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources
- a program plan that has input from stakeholders
- a rationale for staffing arrangements based on the needs of all parties
- program evaluation and ongoing assessment.



There is evidence that energising and engaging the community through a mentoring program can assist schools to find proactive ways to address disengagement.



Mentor helps Phoebe realise her dreams

Seventeen-year-old Phoebe Whakatau thought that a job in a warehouse was the most she could aspire to when she left school. It's what her mum and dad do and it's what they thought she should do. Phoebe had other dreams but didn't have a clue how to realise them.



Mentor helps Phoebe realise her dreams

That was until she met her mentor and fellow Kiwi, Annie Rogers. Annie manages Wesley Mission's Mt Druiitt Integrated Youth Services and began working with Phoebe after she was referred by local police.

"They said she wasn't a bad kid but that she was headed for trouble because of who she was mixing with," Annie said. "They were into anti social behaviour. Her older brother is already in prison."

What Annie saw was a shy and quiet teenager who was a top student in Year 10 but whose aspirations were small and ill-defined.

Phoebe's home "life" is in name only. When her parents aren't working they are either drinking or watching television.

"My folks can't help me with my schoolwork because they don't know any of that stuff," Phoebe said. "Maybe they were brought up in a bad home too but I never see them trying to change anything."

"So I hang around the streets like all the other kids here smoking dope and getting into trouble. Most of them end up in jail."

Apart from being a bright student, Phoebe has something else that marks her as different—motivation and determination.

"I've known for a long time that I didn't want to end up like my parents," Phoebe said.

"They are not good role models and I want to be one, which is why I want a career in child care.

"The aspirations of most of the kids round here don't extend beyond working at the local fast food outlet or going on Centrelink benefits. One of my best friend's is 16 and pregnant—her world view just revolves around the baby thing but I've always wanted more."

Annie recognised that motivation and realised that it was the key to working with Phoebe.

"They've got to want to change. You can't do anything with troubled kids when that desire is not there," Annie said.

The process started around six months ago.

Annie sat with Phoebe and began to define the shy teenager's aspirations which centred on finding work as a child carer.

Phoebe began researching the options and, following a lot of effort, managed to get into a six-month certificate of attainment course in child care at a local TAFE. If she does well, she may be selected for a further course leading to a formal child care qualification.

"I thought it was essential for her to keep going with her education," Annie said. "I see lots of kids around here who drift into jobs at 17 and then end up going back to school at 25 and regretting all that wasted time."

But getting Phoebe into TAFE was just the first step. Annie challenged her to define how well she was going to do in her course—things like getting to class on time, completing assignments by the due date, being respectful in class.

"She figured out the answers and started to set small, achievable goals," Annie said.

With Annie's help and encouragement Phoebe also recently passed the test to get her L-plates. This is a big step—her parents have either never had licences or have had them suspended.

"As Annie drove me around to various places she would always be asking me questions about the road rules and what to do in each situation," Phoebe said.

"More than that, she's explains to me how life works. For example, I never had any idea that people saved money—no-one around me ever did. Annie says having money in the bank is right up there with oxygen in terms of survival.

"With Annie's help, I've also learned to stop arguing with my mum and I've quit smoking.

"I listen to everything she says because she's inspiring and I realise that she really cares for me, even on my bad days. I always make sure I'm on time for anything I do with her because I respect her so much."

Phoebe can only stay under Annie's mentorship until she is 18, but Annie hopes that they will continue as friends.

"I love seeing her grow, achieve and laugh, and I'd really like to see where she is 12 months from now," Annie said.

For her part, Phoebe is full of new-found confidence: "I now know that I can get a child care qualification and that I will eventually get a good stable job as long as I take it in small steps and achieve a goal at each stage," she said.

"So many kids around here could do with an Annie." 



Chapter 7

Implications for policy

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Chapter 7: Implications for policy

For the estimated 50,000 young people in Australia who are falling through the cracks every year and dropping out of education and training and are unemployed, we know more support is needed. Support is particularly critical for teenagers aged 14 to 16 who are making decisions about whether to stay at school or in equivalent VET training until Year 12, or to leave early and enter the workforce.

The changing nature of the labour market, with an increase in skilled and technical positions, while lower skilled positions are falling away, makes support for young people at this stage particularly critical. At a time when the global financial situation is highly unstable, youth unemployment in Australia is on the rise (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010).

In this context, young people with lower levels of educational attainment face an uphill struggle, not only in the short term, but with longer-term employment prospects. For those who are dropping out or disengaging from education, training and employment for extended periods, they may not develop the crucial skills which will affect their future employability (Anlezark, 2011).

It is clear that many young people need more and better support to face the challenging teenage years, and to make the challenging school-to-work or school-to-training transitions more smoothly.

For those who do not receive the support they need, the impacts of higher educational attainment are far deeper than future employment prospects and earnings. We know that those who attain Year 12 or equivalent tend to have better life outcomes, including having a greater sense of control over their lives; greater self-confidence; higher levels of civic engagement, and improved happiness and wellbeing across a range of indicators (Anlezark, 2011; Dockery, 2010; Foundation for Young Australians, 2010).

Recent changes to educational policy in Australia are based on a recognition of the critical importance of educational attainment and retention rates. The changes include the raising of the compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 17 in 2010. This is a tenet of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, which sets an ambitious target of increasing the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2015 (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011).

In striving to achieve such targets, we cannot forget the young people who face particular challenges, whether through poverty, locational disadvantage—particularly those living in rural and remote areas—or from being from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) or non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Less than half of Indigenous young people completed Year 12 or equivalent in 2009, compared to more than three quarters of non-Indigenous young people (Foundation for Young Australians, 2010: 43).

We cannot forget the young people for whom daily life is a struggle. They may lack a safe and secure home or lack loving, supportive adults around them. Making plans or thinking about future career goals may be far from front-of-mind. Wesley Mission's range of youth services are confronted daily with young people who are just trying to get by, or even just trying to stay alive. Basic support with practical life skills, or just lending a listening ear is the first priority for services, which aim to help support vulnerable young people through their personal journeys and transitions.

Wesley Mission’s research indicates that beyond those young people who might be deemed “at risk,” there are many more young people who are looking for more adult support and guidance—particularly young people in their final years of school.

Mentoring is well recognised as an effective means of supporting young people during their school years and through their transitions to their future education, training and employment. The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions provides funding to states and territories through the Youth Connections program, to support young people at risk to re-engage in education and training and build resilience, including through mentoring programs.

While there are many active youth mentoring programs throughout Australia, research shows that many people are unaware of what mentoring means and have not had the opportunity to benefit from a mentoring relationship. Yet many believe they would benefit from a mentoring relationship.

If Australia is to see the level of educational attainment among young people raised significantly and to prevent those who are “falling through the cracks” to re-engage and stay engaged, a more expansive, sophisticated and better-coordinated approach to youth mentoring nationwide is urgently required. Mentoring must be better recognised in terms of its potential to bring enormous benefits, not only to mentees and mentors, but also in strengthening the social fabric of our communities.

Policy research and recommendations

The Wesley Mission policy workshop, held in Sydney in July, 2011 explored the issue of youth mentoring in this context with a range of stakeholders experienced in youth mentoring. Participants in the event were from a range of organisations, including:

- Australian Youth Mentoring Network
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia
- Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- Department of Attorney General and Justice
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations—Youth Attainment and Transitions
- Wesley Mission—Youth and Recreation Services
- Wesley Mission—Aunties & Uncles program
- Yfoundations.

Further research was undertaken on mentoring approaches among organisations such as the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) and the Inspire Foundation.

From this research, Wesley Mission identified the following key areas for policy discussion and action on youth mentoring:

- raise awareness
- expand programs to support youth attainment and transitions
- augment community networks
- strengthen existing approaches.

Mentoring is well recognised as an effective means of supporting young people during their school years and through their transitions to their future education, training and employment pathways.



Chapter 7: Implications for policy

Raise awareness of mentoring

Raising awareness is the first step in encouraging young people to access mentoring programs. A substantial number of young people are unaware of mentoring and its potential benefits. Only around a quarter of young people surveyed have had a mentor.

One in five young people reportedly receive no adult guidance. The potential role of adult mentors to fill this void is apparent.

Education and training institutions have an important role to play in providing information on youth mentoring programs. Careers advisors and teachers may be encouraged to provide information to young people. In addition, sports clubs, youth charities, mainstream services and private sector organisations that have contact with young people may look to raise awareness of mentoring and its benefits.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission advocates the increased distribution of information to young people on mentoring programs and their potential benefits. Resources available through the Australian Youth Mentoring Network and other respected sources may form the basis for this material.

Wesley Mission wants to see this information targeted at young people who are at school and at risk of dropping out. It advocates the dissemination of information by youth charities, along with government agencies involved in young people's education and training programs, and private sector organisations.

One in three young people surveyed want more adult guidance and support than they currently receive – particularly 15 to 17-year-olds. Two in three young people surveyed believe they would benefit from a mentoring relationship over the next 12 months, primarily to support them in their studies, work and career planning.

Widespread unmet demand for mentoring among young people must be met through the expansion of mentoring programs. This will require a larger pool of volunteer mentors within the community and increased resources to support expansion. Raising awareness in the wider community about the benefits of mentoring is critical to achieving these objectives.

Awareness-raising campaigns should focus on messages such as the demonstrated impacts of mentoring in supporting young people's attitudes and wellbeing, educational retention and attainment, along with benefits to the community of improved social cohesiveness. Messages should point to mentoring's effectiveness as an early intervention approach for young people at risk, which represents a strong return on investment.

Wesley Mission advocates awareness-raising campaigns to promote the benefits of youth mentoring in the wider community. These efforts could include media campaigns and the wider dissemination of resources by government, particularly in relation to youth attainment and transitions policies.

We hope that the government and private sectors will support a drive to raise awareness throughout Australia as a priority.

Implement national mentoring program

At a time when education policy and labour markets are in flux, Wesley Mission renews the call for the advancement of a national mentoring strategy. Wesley Mission calls on the Australian Government to take a leadership role in the development of this strategy, working through the Coalition of Australian Governments, and involving a range of stakeholders and service providers.

The groundwork for a national strategy has already been laid through the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, through the Youth Connections program targeted at supporting young people at risk. This may provide the foundation for a national strategy, which must prioritise young people's personal and developmental needs.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission advocates the development of a national youth mentoring strategy, targeted at youth transitions and young people "at risk". This strategy should be developed and led through the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions and involve a range of stakeholders from the youth mentoring sector.

Expand culturally-appropriate initiatives

Wesley Mission advocates the expansion of culturally-specific youth mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

Mentoring programs have enormous potential to support the Coalition of Australian Government's target of halving the gap between attainment rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent by 2020 (COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap — COAG, 2008). The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) is one program that may be expanded to support this goal.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission calls for increased resourcing to support the mentoring programs targeted at supporting Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander young people's educational attainment and transitions. We strongly advocate for the nationwide expansion of the AIME program specifically, in recognition of its demonstrated success to date, with increased financial support from government and the private sector.

Strengthen networks

Mentors are in a strong position to bring together effective support networks around young people, including schools, employers, mainstream services and communities. Programs that provide paid staff as mentors offer strong potential to enable mentors to act as advocates for young people "at risk".

There is strong potential for trained mentors to play a direct role in supporting young people through the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions' School Business Community Partnership Brokers program. Mentors may become involved in the development of strategic plans for "at-risk" young people, for example, to support their engagement and educational attainment. This warrants further exploration.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission calls for further investigation into the potential for youth mentors to act as advocates for young people "at risk" through being involved in multi-agency support networks.

Wesley Mission calls for greater recognition of the potential of mentors-as-advocates to prevent young people "at risk" and in crisis from "falling through the cracks" and dropping out of education, training and employment. It calls on government to support further research in this area, including through exploring the potential role of mentors in the Community Partnership Brokers program.

Strengthen family and community networks

There is strong evidence for the potential for youth mentoring programs to support improved family and community networks and partnerships.

Mentoring programs that involve parents and seek to encourage them to become more engaged in their children's learning can have a significant impact on youth attainment and transitions. In addition, providing parenting skills training through mentoring programs can enhance the effectiveness of programs by supporting parents to support their children.

Communities should be encouraged to support youth mentoring programs through volunteering or providing financial resources, as a means of taking greater ownership over "the youth problem" and issues facing young people who are disengaging and "at risk".

Recommendation

Wesley Mission advocates the structuring of youth mentoring programs to involve parents and community members as a means of more effectively supporting young people at risk. Wesley Mission calls on government and service providers to promote the role of mentoring programs in this context. Wesley Mission also calls on communities, governments and the private sector to actively support the expansion of youth mentoring programs, in recognition of the community-wide benefits they provide.

Chapter 7: Implications for policy

Build on existing approaches

The impact of youth mentoring programs is heavily dependent on robust structures, which incorporate appropriate:

- mentor-mentee matching processes
- adequate case worker supervision
- training for volunteer mentors.

Robust program structures are essential to maximising the effectiveness of programs in supporting youth transitions and in realising a strong return on investment.

There is evidence that the lack of resourcing for case workers to oversee programs is a significant barrier to the expansion of youth mentoring in Australia today. Moreover, programs that lack adequate structures are resulting in less than satisfactory outcomes for vulnerable young people—potentially harming their long term prospects.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission calls on government and the private sector to support the strengthening of existing youth mentoring programs, by resourcing improvements to program structures. We call on organisations to resource the recruitment of more case workers to support and monitor mentoring relationships.

Harness new technologies

New technologies—particularly internet and mobile communications technologies—are profoundly changing the way young people interact with each other and society. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are changing the way young people connect with their friends in particular.

Youth mentoring programs have the potential to better harness online and mobile communications technologies to support young people. Currently, among the young people with experience of Wesley Mission's mentoring programs, for example, just 15 per cent of contact use available technology. Programs which use "e-mentoring" represent a potentially cost-effective approach, particularly in accessing young people living in rural and remote areas.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission supports further research into the potential for mentoring programs to harness online and mobile communications technologies to complement face-to-face contact. Wesley Mission calls on government, program providers and the technology sector to resource further research into the appropriate and effective use of technology in youth mentoring programs.

Adopt best practice benchmarks

There is currently no consistent benchmarking in place across Australian youth mentoring programs. This lack of quality control may be hindering the potential effectiveness of programs in supporting young people who access them. This is also hindering ability of program providers to provide effective data to demonstrate return on investment, which may assist in leveraging resources to expand programs to meet demand.

There is an urgent need for quality benchmarks to be agreed and adopted across program providers. The benchmarks developed a decade ago by Mentoring Australia in association with the National Association of Mentors and established program providers, could provide the foundation for a set of agreed national principles.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission advocates the widespread agreement on and adoption of quality benchmarks for youth mentoring programs. It calls for a renewed focus on the benchmarks established by Mentoring Australia and others in 2000, with a view to seeking widespread agreement of these benchmarks among program providers.

Wesley Mission calls on government and peak sectoral bodies to lead the review and renewal of these guiding principles and to encourage their widespread voluntary adoption, with the underlying aim of improving programs' effectiveness. Wesley Mission encourages government to support the adoption of a set of national benchmarks.

Monitor and evaluate programs

Youth mentoring in Australia lacks strong evidence in relation to the relative effectiveness of programs. Improved monitoring and evaluation of programs is essential to demonstrating their effectiveness to leverage increased resources to support their expansion.

There is a need for improved depth and consistency of data collection across programs, including data on mentees, which may enable longitudinal evaluation of programs' effectiveness. Improved monitoring and evaluation will facilitate improved understanding of:

- barriers to effective outcomes through mentoring
- factors for success in establishing mentoring partnerships
- factors associated with the role of age, gender and cultural background in determining outcomes.

Increased resources from government in this context will enable:

- development of cross-sectoral data gathering and evaluation protocols
- associated training for program managers and case workers
- ongoing monitoring of evaluation practices and approaches among programs by government, to support the development of a national quality framework for youth mentoring.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission calls for improved monitoring and evaluation of youth mentoring programs. It calls on government to take a leadership role in coordinating and resourcing the development of a national approach to data collection, monitoring and evaluation. It advocates for the widespread adoption of best practice benchmarks to support this change.

It also calls for the establishment of information-sharing networks and protocols to enable program providers to better share data and learnings.

Build the business case

Youth mentoring is recognised as an enormously powerful early intervention approach. While it is resource intensive, it offers a strong return on investment in the long term and has the potential to generate benefits which far outweigh the costs (Colley & Hanlon, 2009; Moodie & Fisher, 2009).

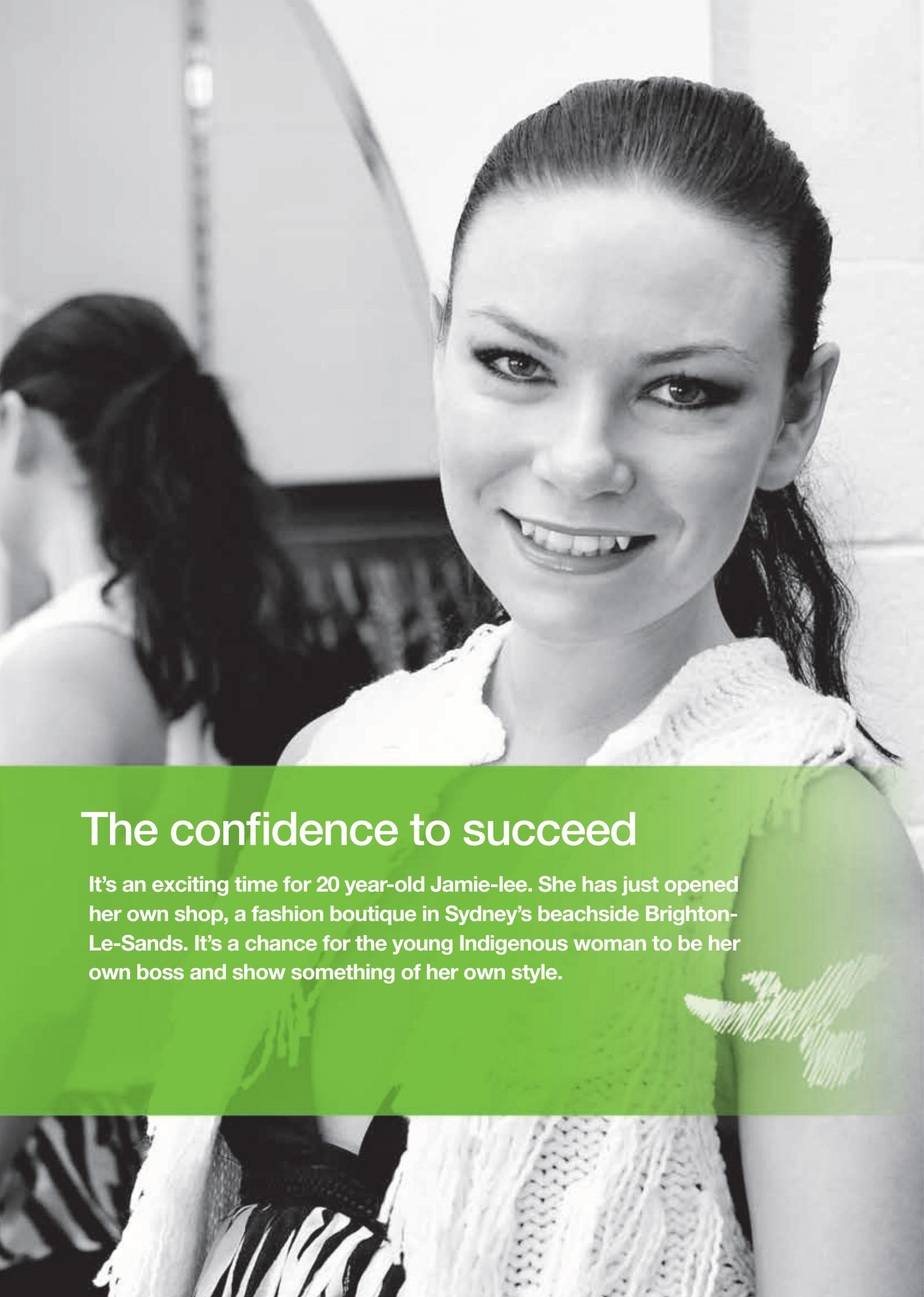
There is a strong need for more evidence to be gathered on the social return on investment (SROI) associated with mentoring, in order to provide a strong business case which will assist in leveraging greater support for mentoring programs, particularly from the private sector.

To enable a thorough cost/benefit analysis of Australian youth mentoring programs, improved data gathering, monitoring and evaluation is required.

Recommendation

Wesley Mission advocates for programs to seek to build the business case for youth mentoring through improved monitoring and evaluation of programs. It wants to see the improved evaluation specifically aimed at quantifying the social return on investment of mentoring as an early intervention approach.

Wesley Mission calls on government along with the non-government sectors to allocate resources to gathering and disseminating evidence to support the business case for youth mentoring as a priority.



The confidence to succeed

It's an exciting time for 20 year-old Jamie-lee. She has just opened her own shop, a fashion boutique in Sydney's beachside Brighton-Le-Sands. It's a chance for the young Indigenous woman to be her own boss and show something of her own style.



Like many people, achievement in high school gave Jamie-lee the confidence to go on to further success. Going from poor results in early high school to being in the top 10 of Year 11 English in her school has been the springboard for her milestones so far. That confidence was also crucial in getting her life back following a crisis after she finished school.

It's a far cry from her childhood when domestic violence and her parent's heavy drug use saw Jamie-lee and her five siblings placed with foster families.

At one time, 11 year-old Jamie-lee and her siblings were taken by their birth parents from their foster families and hidden in a relative's house.

They were eventually placed with different families and, as Jamie-lee started high school, Wesley Mission introduced her to a couple she really clicked with, Paula and Richard. The trio formed a loving family for the bulk of her teenage years. Even when Paula and Richard sadly separated, Jamie-lee continued living with Paula and later Richard.

Not surprisingly after such a rough start, Jamie-lee always found it hard to apply herself to school work. In Year 9, she was referred to the education mentoring program headed by Victoria Drew at Wesley Dalmar Children's Services.

The program is designed to assist children in out-of-home care over social and educational difficulties at school. "Over 50 per cent of children in foster care do not complete Year 10," Victoria said. "Children in foster care are also much more likely than their peers to be unemployed or homeless, so programs like this are critical."

Participants meet once or twice a week to go over school work and discuss other issues that are affecting them at school.

Jamie-lee met Victoria once a week for a couple of hours after school to work on homework and assignments. Victoria supported her to establish good work habits and organisational skills and develop independent learning skills.

As the relationship developed, they also chatted about life more generally and Jamie-lee found she was able to talk about her past. "In foster care, you keep a lot of secrets," Jamie-lee said.

In her struggle to come to terms with the effects of such a traumatic childhood and her insecurities about being Indigenous, she found she could talk openly about her past with Victoria.

"Education is not just about getting good marks," Victoria said. "It's about developing the capacity to reflect on the world and one's own life."

Gradually Jamie-lee's marks improved and, as a result, she became more interested in school. Her great results in Year 11 demonstrated her potential. She was eager to "get into the real world" and early in Year 12 became a hairdresser. It was here she developed her love of fashion.

In her last couple of years at school, her foster parents' split and her foster mother subsequently departed for Queensland. This hit her hard.

"I was going crazy inside my head," Jamie-lee said. After she left school, she started taking drugs and getting into very negative relationships.

However, the benefits of her time with Victoria continued to pay off. "Victoria built confidence in me and I couldn't have pulled myself out of the crisis without that," she said. For Jamie-lee this was the key benefit of mentoring.

She eventually left the drugs behind and moved forward. "I was such an angry person but I reached a stage where I didn't want to be like that any more," she said.

Jamie-lee has started to explore her Aboriginal heritage and, with pride, see this as part of her identity.

She has become a mentor to her younger siblings. When one of her sisters ran away from her foster family, Jamie-lee took her in and they lived together for a while. Her 16-year-old brother has been in trouble with the law and he is now living with her. She is finding the balance between giving him firm boundaries and enabling him to open up about his difficult past.

To young people struggling, she said: "where you've come from doesn't mean you have to stay there. You can go out and get what you want in life".

Jamie-lee is always busy with the business, doing the bookkeeping, making the purchase decisions, and organising finance. She has hired a local high school girl to serve in the shop on Sundays. "I've always been driven to be successful and to want good things for myself. Things are coming together in a big way," she said. 🌱



Appendices

Appendices



Appendix A: Profile of respondents

Survey one: general population sample

Age and sex

The sample comprises a reasonably even gender split (58 per cent female, 42 per cent male).

Studying

Just under two in three respondents were currently studying: 32 per cent at school (includes taking school subjects at TAFE) and 31 per cent at a University or TAFE College (including apprenticeships) (see Figure A2). The current school students were mostly in Year 10, 11 and 12 (63 of 67); all but three expected to complete Year 12.

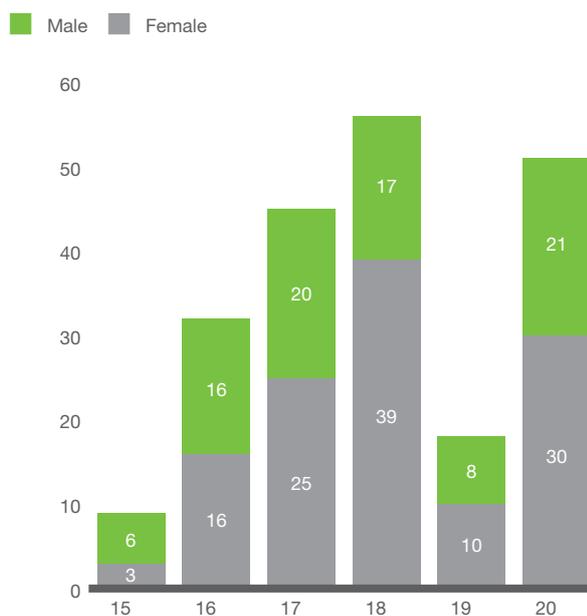
Working

Just over half of the young people in the survey had a job (56 per cent), and a further 21 per cent were looking for work (see Figure A2). Work hours ranged from over 30 hours a week (45 young people—typically 18-20-year-olds) down to less than 10 hours (28 young people).

Socioeconomic status

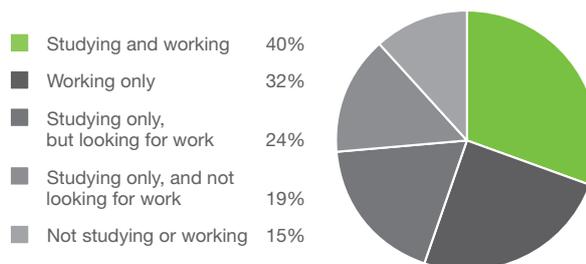
By way of a broad indicator of socioeconomic status, just over two-thirds attended government schools (70 per cent) and one-third private schools (30 per cent) in their highest year of schooling.

Figure A1: Age and gender characteristics of the sample (%)



Base: all respondents n=211

Figure A2: Education and employment status of the sample (%)



n=107*

*Excludes four respondents who have left school but whose current education status is unknown

Survey two: Wesley Mission mentees

Although 47 is not a large sample, it is certainly adequate to provide an indication of the spectrum of typical mentoring outcomes and experiences.

The reader may notice that the sample size tends to differ from question to question, usually sitting in the mid to low 40s rather than exactly 47. This is a product of the survey being completed in hard copy by 15 mentees; online completion did not allow respondents to skip any questions.

Age and sex

The sample comprises a reasonably even gender split (45 per cent female, 55 per cent male) and an average age of 16 (see Figure A3). The age of mentees ranged from 14 to 23: 41 per cent were aged 14–15, 39 per cent aged 16–17 and 20 per cent aged 18+.

Studying

All except two mentees were currently studying: 72 per cent at school (includes taking school subjects at TAFE) and further 14 per cent at a University or TAFE College (including apprenticeships). Reflecting the age of the sample, the current school students included twice as many Year 8 to 10 students (n=24) as Year 11 and 12 students (n=12) (see Figure A3).

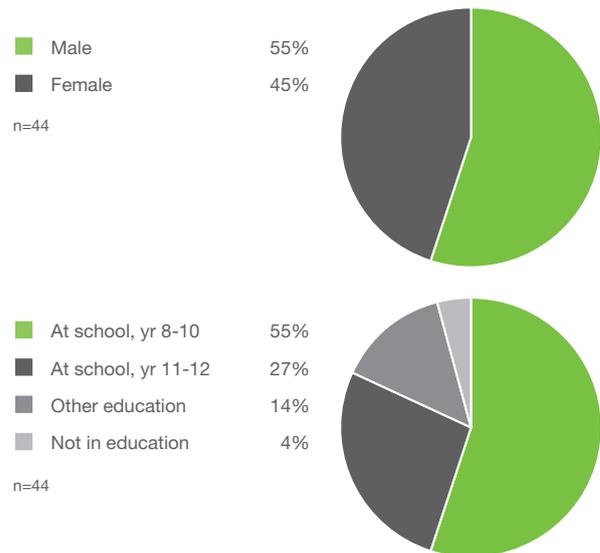
Working

One in three mentees in the survey had a job (32 per cent), and a further third (36 per cent) were looking for work.

Socioeconomic status

Some 85 per cent of mentees had attended a government school in their highest year of schooling.

Figure A3: Sex and education status of the mentee sample (%)



Appendix A: Profile of respondents

Exposure to mentoring

Close to half (45 per cent) of the mentee sample had been mentored through Aunties & Uncles, an early intervention mentoring program for children who face social and emotional challenges. The remainder had participated in a variety of Wesley Mission programs where mentoring had been a feature, including through employment services, Out of Home Care and youth outreach services (see Figure A4).

Most mentees (68 per cent) had only had one mentor; those with multiple mentors were asked to answer the survey thinking only about their relationship with their most recent mentor. Four in five respondents (79 per cent) reported that this mentoring relationship was still ongoing (see Figure A4).

Across the total sample, the typical mentoring relationship had been in place for three years and three months and involved eight hours of (mostly face-to-face) contact per month (see Figure A5). However, the range around these median figures this was quite large:

- the newest mentoring relationship had only been in place for three weeks; the longest one was 15 years
- the minimum contact reported was less than one hour per month; the most contact reported was 56 hours a month (close to two hours every day).

Figure A4: Participation in mentoring programs (%)

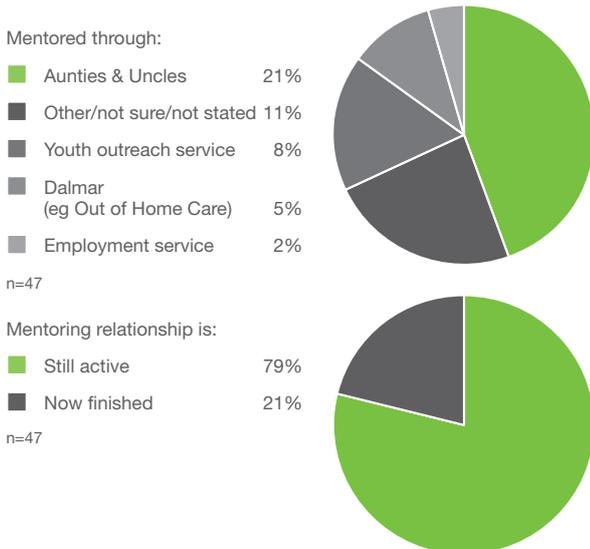
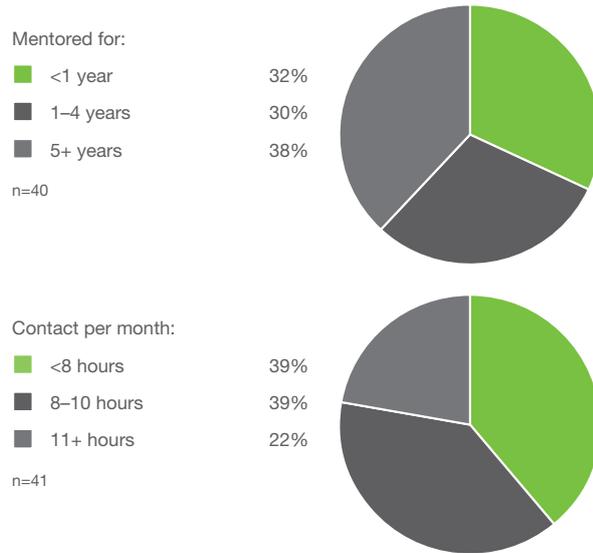


Figure A5: Duration, intensity and mode of most recent mentoring relationship (%)



Appendix B: Questionnaire—survey one

Part A—current study/work

A1. Are you currently...

- At school (includes taking school subjects at TAFE)
- Doing an apprenticeship → Go to A3
- Doing a course at TAFE → Go to A3
- At University → Go to A3
- Doing other study or education (specify _____) → Go to A3
- Not doing education at the moment → Go to A3

A2a. [If at school] What year are you in at school?

- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

A2b. [If at school] What is the highest school year you think you will complete?

- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

→ Go to A4

A3. [If not at school] What is the highest school year you have completed?

- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

A4. Are you currently working?

- Yes, 30+ hours a week
- Yes, 20–29 hours a week
- Yes, 10–19 hours a week
- Yes, less than 10 hours a week
- No, but I'm looking for work
- No, and I'm not looking for work

Part B—goals and plans

B1. Thinking about your future, would you say you...

- Have clear goals for what you want to do in life
- Have some ideas about what you want to do in life, but no clear goals
- Don't know what you want to do in life → Go to B3

B2. Does your current study and/or work feel like...

- Good preparation for what you want to do in life
- Poor preparation for what you want to do in life
- Not sure

B3. And would you say you have...

- A clear plan for the next few years
- A loose plan for the next few years
- No plan for the next few years—just take it as it comes

Part C—guidance and mentoring

C1. How important do you feel it is to get guidance and support from people older than you—to help you think about your future, set goals, make plans etc?

Would you say that guidance and support from people older than you is...

- Essential—I don't know what I'd do without it
- A good idea, but not essential
- Not important—it doesn't really influence me
- A bad idea—I'm better off without it

C2. Do you feel you get the right amount of guidance and support from people older than you to help you think about your future, set goals, make plans etc?

- I get too much guidance and support—it feels like they're interfering
- I would like more guidance and support than I currently receive
- I currently get about the right amount of guidance and support

Appendix B: Questionnaire—survey one

C3. Do you have any positive older role models in your life—someone older than you who you respect and trust, who you could go to for support if you had a problem, or who you look to for guidance and direction?

- Yes
- No → Go to C5
- Not sure → Go to C5

C4a. Who are you thinking of here—this/these positive older role models in your life? (Choose all that apply)

- An older friend/friends
- A parent/parents
- A grandparent, uncle, aunt, etc
- An older brother, sister, cousins etc
- A family friend
- A parent of one of your friends
- A teacher or staff member from school, TAFE, Uni etc
- A coach or someone else from a sporting group, club, team etc
- Someone from a faith-based group you belong to (church etc)
- Someone from a community organisation, eg a youth service
- A public personality who you admire or follow (eg radio DJ, elite sports person, musician, actor, blogger etc)
- Other (specify _____)

C4b. [If multiple responses at C4a] Which of these people has had the greatest positive influence on you? (Choose one only)

[Scripting note—offer options selected at C4a]

C5. Have you ever heard of the term ‘mentor’ or ‘mentoring’?

- Yes
- No → Go to C9
- Not sure → Go to C9

C6. In your own words, please briefly describe what you would expect a mentoring relationship to involve.

C7. Have you ever had a ‘mentor’?

- Yes
- No → Go to C9
- Not sure → Go to C9

C8. [If yes at C7] Who have your mentor/s been? (Choose all that apply)

[Scripting note—this is the same list as C4]

- An older friend/friends
- A parent/parents
- A grandparent, uncle, aunt, etc
- An older brother, sister, cousins etc
- A family friend
- A parent of one of your friends
- A teacher or staff member from school, TAFE, Uni etc
- A coach or someone else from a sporting group, club, team etc
- Someone from a faith-based group you belong to (church etc)
- Someone from a community organisation, eg a youth service
- A public personality who you admire or follow (eg radio DJ, elite sports person, musician, actor, blogger etc)
- Other (specify _____)

C9. So far in your life, who specifically has given you guidance and support in the following areas? If no-one has given you guidance and support, just click ‘no-one’ at the bottom of the list.

- a) Who (if anyone) has given you guidance and support with personal matters, eg family and relationships, making decisions about sex, alcohol, drugs etc

[Scripting note—this is the same list as C4, plus a code at the start for ‘A friend/friends my age’ and a code at the end for ‘No-one’]

- A friend/friends my age
- An older friend/friends
- A parent/parents
- A grandparent, uncle, aunt, etc
- An older brother, sister, cousins etc
- A family friend
- A parent of one of your friends
- A teacher or staff member from school, TAFE, Uni etc
- A coach or someone else from a sporting group, club, team etc
- Someone from a faith-based group you belong to (church etc)
- Someone from a community organisation, eg a youth service
- A public personality who you admire or follow (eg radio DJ, elite sports person, musician, actor, blogger etc)
- Other (specify _____)
- No-one

- b) Who (if anyone) has given you guidance and support with practical matters, eg managing your money, getting a drivers license, looking after your health

[Repeat code frame from C9a]

- c) Who (if anyone) has given you guidance and support with your education—picking subjects at school, choosing a course at TAFE or Uni, managing the stress of assignments and exams etc

[Repeat code frame from C9a]

- d) Who (if anyone) has given you guidance and support with work or career planning—thinking about your career, finding work, dealing with stressful situations in the workplace etc

[Repeat code frame from C9a]

C10. One definition of a mentor is:

“A person who can draw on their life experience to give you advice, support and guidance. They can help you think through your priorities, set goals and make plans for how you can achieve these goals and overcome the obstacles in your path”.

Do you feel you would benefit from a mentoring relationship over the next 12 months with regard to...

	Yes	No	Not sure
personal matters, eg family and relationships, making decisions about sex, alcohol, drugs etc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
practical matters, eg managing your money, getting a drivers license, looking after your health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
your education—picking subjects at school, choosing a course at TAFE or Uni, managing the stress of assignments and exams etc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
work or career planning— thinking about your career, finding work, dealing with stressful situations in the workplace etc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C11. Apart from the above, are there any other areas of your life were you feel you could benefit from a mentoring relationship over the next 12 month?

- Yes (specify _____)
- No
- Not sure

Part D—demographics

D1. How old are you?

- _____ years

D2. Are you...

- Male
- Female

D3. What is your postcode (where you live most of the time)?

- _____
- If unsure, what is the name of your suburb?

D4. During high school, do you/did you go to a...

- Government school/public school
- Private school

(If both, select the one where you completed your highest/most recent school year)

Appendix C: Questionnaire—survey two

Introductory notes

You have been asked to do this survey because you have had a mentor through a program run by Wesley Mission (including the Aunties & Uncles program).

The purpose of the survey is to help Wesley Mission improve and expand its mentoring programs.

Some of the questions have answers you can choose from; others will ask you to type your response.

The survey is anonymous, and will be analysed by independent researchers from the University of Wollongong. Wesley Mission will only receive a report that summarises the total responses.

If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact Duncan Rintoul at the University of Wollongong by phone (02 4221 4559) or email (drintoul@uow.edu.au).

Part A—the mentoring experience

A0. Which program/service did you have a mentor through? (If you aren't sure, check the details of invitation that gave you the link to this survey)

- Aunties & Uncles
- A Wesley Mission employment program/service
- A Wesley Mission youth outreach program/service
- A Wesley Mission Dalmar program/service (eg Out of Home Care)
- A Wesley Mission camp (eg Operation Hope)
- A Wesley Mission Independent Living Program
- Other/not sure

A1. Through this program/service, did you have...

- Just one mentor
- More than one mentor → Please answer these questions just thinking about your *most recent* mentor.

A2. Is this mentoring relationship...

- Still active
- Now finished

A3a. How long have you had/did you have this mentor?

- ____ years/____ months

A3b [If ongoing: go to A4. If finished, ask...] Did that amount of time (<< A3a>>) seem to be...

- Too long (ie should have finished earlier)
- Too short (ie should have kept meeting for longer)
- About right

A4a. How much contact do/did you have with this mentor?

- Approx ____ hours per month

A4b. Do/did you have contact with this mentor...

(Select all that apply)

- Face to face
- Online
- By phone
- Other (specify _____)

A4c. [If ongoing: go to A5. If finished, ask...] Did that amount of contact (<<A4a>> hours per month) seem to be...

- Too much (ie should have met less often/had shorter meetings)
- Not enough (ie we should have met more often/had longer meetings)
- About right

A5. What areas of life has your mentoring relationship focused on?

A6. How much say have you had about what you and your mentor focused on? Would you say...

- You mostly decided what to focus on
- Your mentor mostly decided what to focus on
- The two of you decided what to focus on together

A7. How would you describe the level of 'personal connection' between you and your mentor? Would you say you have had...

- A very strong connection
- A fairly strong connection
- Some connection, but not much
- No connection

A8. Would you use any of the following words to describe your mentor?

Select 'yes' or 'no' for each one.

[rotate order]	Yes	No
Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspiring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Controlling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy to relate to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interested in you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Genuine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quick to judge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fun to be with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Part B—making big decisions about education, training or work

B1a. During your mentoring relationship, did you make any big decisions about education, training or work?

- Yes → go to B2
- No → go to B1b

B1b. [If no at B1a] During your mentoring relationship, did you make any big decisions about any other things that are important to you, eg personal issues, practical matters?

- Yes (please specify _____)
- No → go to Alternative Part B

B2. Did you look to your mentor for guidance or support about this decision?

- Yes
- No → go to B4

B3a. [If sought mentor input] How helpful was your mentor with this decision? Would you say your mentor...

- was very helpful
- was some help, but not a great deal
- was no help
- made things harder for you

B3b. Why do you say that? That is, what did you mentor do that <<answer from B3>>?

B4. Who else (if anyone) did you look to for guidance or support about this decision? (Click all that apply)

- A friend/friends my age
- An older friend/friends
- A parent/parents
- A grandparent, uncle, aunt, etc
- An older brother, sister, cousins etc
- A family friend
- A parent of one of your friends
- A teacher or staff member from school, TAFE, Uni etc
- A coach or someone else from a sporting group, club, team etc
- Someone from a faith-based group you belong to (church etc)
- Someone from a community organisation, eg a youth service
- A public personality who you admire or follow (eg radio DJ, elite sportsperson, musician, actor, blogger etc)
- Other (specify _____)
- No-one

B5. [If sought mentor input] How important would you say your relationship with your mentor was in making this/these decisions?

- Very important
- Fairly important
- Some importance, but not much
- Not important at all

Alternative Part B, if ongoing mentoring relationship but no big decisions yet:

Imagine you had to make a big decision this week about education, training or work.

a) Would you seek guidance or support from your mentor about this decision?

- Yes
- No → Go to (c)

b) What would you be looking for from your mentor?

c) Who else (if anyone) would you go to for guidance or support? (Select all that apply)

- As per B5 above

Part C—Impact of mentoring

C1. How would you describe the impact of your mentoring relationship overall? Would you say it has had...

- A very positive impact
- Some positive impact, but not that much
- No impact
- Negative impact

C2. What changes has your mentoring relationship led to? Please say below whether, because of your mentoring relationship, each of the following things is now 'better', 'about the same' or 'not as good'.

<i>Rotate order of items</i>	Better	About the same	Not as good	Not relevant to me
Your self-esteem, ie how you feel about yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quality of your personal life and relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your attendance and behaviour at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your academic performance at school (assignment marks, grades etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your chances of finding work that suits your skills and interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staying out of trouble with the police or others in authority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your motivation to do constructive things with your time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How you cope with life's everyday problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The choices you make about smoking, drinking and drugs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Part D—Goals and plans

Goals

D1. Before you started your mentoring relationship, would you say you...

- Had clear goals for what you wanted to do in life
- Had some ideas about what you wanted to do in life, but no clear goals
- Didn't know what you want to do in life

D2. And what about now—would you say you...

- Have clear goals for what you want to do in life
- Have some ideas about what you want to do in life, but no clear goals
- Don't know what you want to do in life → Go to D4

D3. [If has goals at D2] Because of your mentoring relationship, would you say that your goals for what you want to achieve in life are now...

- Bigger/more ambitious
- Smaller/less ambitious
- No bigger or smaller, just different
- Much the same as they were before
- Plans

D4. Before you started your mentoring relationship, would you say you had...

- A clear plan for the next few years
- A loose plan for the next few years
- No plan for the next few years – just take it as it comes

D5. And what about now—would you say you have...

- A clear plan for the next few years
- A loose plan for the next few years
- No plan for the next few years – just take it as it comes → Go to D7

D6. [If has a plan at D5] Because of your mentoring relationship, would you say that your plans for the next few years are now...

- More realistic
- Less realistic
- No more or less realistic, just different
- Much the same as they were before

D7. Because of your mentoring relationship, would you say that you now...

- Take more responsibility for your actions
- Take less responsibility for your actions
- No difference

Part E—open enders

E1. Apart from what you have described above, are there any other positive or negative changes that have come out of your mentoring relationship? If yes, please briefly describe here.

E2. What is the one most helpful thing your mentor has done with you or said to you?

E3. What (if anything) could have been done differently to make your mentoring relationship more helpful for you?

E4. What would you say are the most important characteristics a mentor needs to have?

Part F—demographics

F1. How old are you?

- ____ years

F2. Are you...

- Male
- Female

F3. What is your postcode (where you live most of the time)?

- _____
- (If unsure, what is the name of your suburb?)

F4. Are you currently...

- At school (includes taking school subjects at TAFE)
- Doing an apprenticeship → Go to F6
- Doing a course at TAFE → Go to F6
- At University → Go to F6
- Doing other study or education (specify _____) → Go to F6
- Not doing education at the moment → Go to F6

F5a. [If at school] What year are you in at school?

- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

F5b. [If at school] What is the highest school year you think you will complete?

- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

→ Go to F7

F6. [If not at school] What is the highest school year you have completed?

- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

F7. During high school, do you/did you go to a...

- Government school/public school
- Private school
- (If both, select the one where you completed your highest/most recent school year)

F8. Are you currently working?

- Yes, 30+ hours a week
- Yes, 20–29 hours a week
- Yes, 10–19 hours a week
- Yes, less than 10 hours a week
- No, but I'm looking for work
- No, and I'm not looking for work

Appendix D: Quality control

Quality control

The sample source for the online component of this survey was a leading online research panel provider, Survey Village, which has more than 85,000 registered members.

Survey Village provides high quality sample for market and social research. It is a 100 per cent research-only panel, ie not used for direct marketing or any other purpose.

Its members are carefully recruited using multiple online and offline sources in order to reduce the problems and bias associated with narrow source recruitment.

Members sign up via a double opt-in system, so no-one joins the panel "by accident." Home address validation is also used in order to prevent sign up duplication.

Transaction history of all respondents is kept in order to apply panel source rules (eg exceptions based on chronological or topic participation).

All panelists have access to a help desk and a rewards and transactional portal.

The survey questionnaire itself complied with the AMSRS Code of Professional Conduct with regard to research with children and young people.

Appendix E: References and resources

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Help give kids a chance

Wesley Mission services

Aunties & Uncles

This long-running program provides support to disadvantaged children from three to 13 by pairing them with a volunteer “aunt” and “uncle”.

The program provides the opportunity for children to experience the stability and benefits of an extended family; supports the role of the parent/s of the child; and gives volunteers the chance to make a positive contribution to a child’s life.

EQUIP

This mentoring program connects young people in Western Sydney with an older adult volunteer who can offer them guidance and support.

The program is run from Wesley Mission’s Mt DrUITT Integrated Youth Service in Emerton, but works with young people across Western Sydney.

Wesley Dalmar Services

Wesley Dalmar provides homes for children and young people who cannot live with their families by recruiting, training and supporting foster carers.

These people are committed to providing a safe, secure and loving environment for the children or young people in their care.

Wesley Dalmar has been providing care for children and young people since 1893.

Other services

Many of Wesley Mission’s Youth and Recreation Services incorporate informal mentoring approaches, aimed at providing one-on-one support to young people.

These include:

- youth outreach centres, which provide a range of services and support
- youth homelessness services, which provide support for young people aged 12 to 25 who are homeless or at risk
- youth employment services
- counselling services
- the Independent Living Program, which provides practical guidance and independent living skills for young people aged 16 to 22 who have left home
- Vision Valley, a recreation camp which aims to support young people’s personal growth through outdoor activities, including through the Operation Hope camp for disadvantaged young people.

Seeing a better future with mentoring

When you grow up in a disadvantaged family, it’s hard to see beyond the chaos and lack of care that define your life. Wesley Mission offers these kids the chance to see a different reality through being mentored by supportive, non-judgmental adults. Together with their mentors they’ll experience stable relationships, learn new things, get sound advice and, most of all, have fun. However, while we have no shortage of people wanting to be mentors, we lack the funds to train and monitor them. Donate now to support Wesley Mission’s mentoring programs and help disadvantaged kids see their world in a new way.

Please send your donation today

Fill in the coupon overleaf or call 1800 021 821.





Yes, I want to help kids see their world in a new way.

I/We would like to give to the work of Wesley Mission

Title: (Rev/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other) _____

First name: _____

Surname: _____

Company name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone (work): _____

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Amount: \$

I have enclosed my Cheque/Money Order
(payable to Wesley Mission)

OR

Please charge my:

Visa Mastercard Amex Diners

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Signature: _____

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Wesley Mission collects your details for fundraising and to update you on all our activities. All information collected is covered by our privacy policy, see www.wesleymission.org.au. Please contact us if you do not wish to receive further information.

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Thank you.

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