

Evaluation of the GROW Programme Report

Phase 1: June 2020 – September 2021

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1. Introduction

In July 2020 the GROW Programme was developed in response to the disruption to schooling caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It provided a platform for pupils, graduate mentors, and schools to connect and thrive, involving 25-hour training for graduates in mentoring, and a 15-hour mentoring programme for Y10 and Y11 pupils in South Yorkshire schools. Following the pilot it was rolled out and developed further in November 2020 and the offer extended to all Barnsley schools, including Y13s, in February 2021. This evaluation of the GROW Programme aims to identify the efficacy of its design and delivery in order to improve its outcomes, and to disseminate the benefits of the model, within SHU and externally via journal papers and conferences. It examines graduate mentors' perceptions of the training programme and its benefits, including those related to graduate attributes and employment. This includes the skills and knowledge of mentoring that graduates have gained in the mentoring programme, and how the programme has supported graduate readiness for their next step in their career, including the specific aspects of the programme and work with pupils that influenced their decisions.

The effects of the mentoring programme on pupils are also examined, in terms of the recovery of learning, including the agency of mentors in supporting pupils to develop their confidence, habits of work and learning, and metacognitive strategies to meet the needs of assessment at a crucial stage in their school careers. Analysis draws on the perceptions of school staff of the effects on pupils' participation in the programme and engagement with learning. This research will inform the future development of this form of intervention and the programme design and its effectiveness.

The research questions guiding this evaluation are:

1. What skills and knowledge have graduates gained in the training and mentoring programmes and how has it supported their readiness for the next step in their career?
2. How do mentors and school staff perceive the effects of the mentoring programme on pupils' re-engagement with learning?
3. How effective is the design of the programme in preparing graduates for working with pupil mentees and how is online mentoring perceived as a method of building trust and encouraging dialogue?

2. Programme context

The GROW programme began in May 2020 as a collaboration between Sheffield Hallam University and schools in the four regions of South Yorkshire (Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham) during the first (partial) lockdown of schools. It emerged from discussions between the university and the Northern Powerhouse Partnership (<https://northernpowerhouse.gov.uk/about/>), part of the UK-government-funded strategy to develop regional economy.

The case for an intervention was driven, in part, by demographic and geographic factors. The urban areas of South Yorkshire are in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England, according to the indices of multiple deprivation in terms of income, health, and education (McClennan et al., 2019) with multi-generational family unemployment, and below national average achievement in all levels of education.

The GROW programme was an agile and rapid response, launched within 10 weeks of the first lockdown of the covid 19 pandemic, in June 2020. It was self-funded and free-to-schools. In contrast, the UK government's response to the restrictions to schooling came later in October 2020, setting up the £350 million flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP): "... to support children left behind academically by disruption of the coronavirus pandemic".

3. Underlying theory of GROW

The programme's aims are social-psychological in nature and designed to improve academic success by changing how students think or feel about themselves and their schoolwork and thereby encouraging them to take advantage of learning opportunities provided by the school. The design of the programme is underpinned by research evidence that has informed its development.

3.1 Intended effects on pupils and schooling

GROW can be characterised as a positive education programme in that it maps to many of the principles of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective, including the fostering of self-determination, self-efficacy, and belief in the future (Lerner et al., 2005). The GROW curriculum acknowledges the disruption of CV19 to pupils' lives as an adverse childhood experience. Mentors are trained in safeguarding and trauma-informed approaches (Thomas, Crosby and Vanderhaar, 2019) and are asked to log and report critical incidents that occur during mentoring sessions. Given the purpose of the programme to build academic engagement and positive attitudes and strategies for learning, an evaluation might examine the ability of individuals to overcome setbacks that have the potential to limit motivation and performance. Relevant measures, that broadly guided the development of the curriculum at the outset, include academic buoyancy (AB) and academic resilience (AR) (Martin & Marsh, 2009). AB applies to the majority of individuals in an academic setting, whereas AR applies to individuals who may experience acute adversity. Poor AB is related to low level negative outcomes such as achievement anxiety, isolated poor grades, temporary lapses in engagement and motivation, and minor negative interactions with teachers; poor AR is predictive of high-level negative outcomes such as disengagement from school, chronic under achievement, sustained disaffection and truancy, and opposition to teachers (Martin, 2013). While avoiding the pitfalls of cause and effect, a measure of resilience / buoyancy and of engagement / disaffection can provide a broad measure of impact.

The importance of school as context for learning also arises, where disruption included the transfer back and forth between *school* and *home* as the site of learning. School as *de facto* site for learning has established, over time, the actors, practices, and protocols that create a framework for education (Maton, 2014, p.135). Surrounding this is the system of meanings that constitute the purpose of schooling, that becomes destabilised, and called into question, when the connections are weakened or broken, or become adrift of their moorings.

3.2 Trauma-informed approach

Broadly based on the GROW model (Whitmore, 2002), the programme aimed to address the immediate / short-term needs of pupils dealing with being out of school, or preparing to return, and

in recovering positive habits of work and learning, including the routine of learning (Schleicher, 2020). Mid-term needs such as the next stages of future study and careers were devised as extension activities, used appropriately by the mentor as required. Importantly, the curriculum is trauma-informed (Thomas, Crosby, and Vanderhaar, 2019), recognising that trauma can vary in its extremities, and is unique to the individual, but in itself can have a profound effect on a young person's self-esteem, sense of worth, and their capacity to learn. Key ideas informing the design of the intervention include explicitly teaching pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, and setting an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition (MSR) (Quigley, Muijs, and Stringer, 2018).

3.3 Metacognition and self-regulation (MSR)

MSR, defined, simply, as developing pupils' ability to monitor, direct, and review their learning by teaching them to set goals, and to evaluate their own learning, is rated by the EEF Teaching Toolkit as "high impact", with pupils making on average seven months of additional progress on attainment, for very low cost (Quigley, Muijs, and Stringer, 2018). Promoting and developing metacognitive talk in the learning activity is seen as significant in the design of the GROW curriculum because it helps pupils to organise and effectively manage their learning independently, and to model thinking by focusing on the thought processes behind decisions they make, as well as teaching the strategy itself (Sperling, Howard, Staley, and Dubois, 2004). This approach can be synthesised as the cycle *Activate; Practice; Reflect; and Review* (see Table 1 for examples of how this is realised in the GROW curriculum). Here GROW takes account of the interrelationship between metacognition and motivation as cyclical (Karaali, 2015). Therefore, the three key phases of the programme - *Foundations; Curriculum Learning; and Planning the Future* - are aligned with success in attaining goals (10 workbooks, five digital badges (DBs) and a certificate of completion) in which motivation is addressed across all activities.

3.4 Support for curriculum learning

While the GROW programme is not explicitly subject-focussed it does address what might be broadly termed "curriculum learning". However, the programme acknowledges the important link between MSR and specialist subject knowledge in which subject knowledge itself is the basis of abstract thought, encapsulated in the term "powerful knowledge" (Young & Muller, 2013). The epistemic structure of knowledge, elaborated in conceptual systems of meaning of the discipline / subject itself, it is argued, is the source for learning coherence and depth (McPhail and Rata, 2015; Rata, 2020). The approach taken in the GROW programme is that metacognitive development can assist with the consolidation of learning through being able to justify and explain learning choices and decisions (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). MSR alone cannot bring about deep learning, but it can develop the potential for it, especially in the context of disruption to schooling, and to how a school subject is constituted.

With subject knowledge in mind, therefore, the phases *Foundations* and *Planning the Future* wrap around six sessions that cover metacognitive aspects of subject learning. Here, the pupil is able to raise specific subject problems with the mentor (such as difficulty with mathematics for example) and the mentor works through activities with the pupil designed to unpack and develop new strategies for tackling difficulties.

Table 1: Principles of metacognition and their realisation in GROW

Principle	Description	Example realisation in GROW
Activate	What we learn depends on what we know already, and it's important to get students thinking about prior knowledge that will help them with their next steps.	Phase 1: Foundations , activities covering induction to the programme (WB1: <i>Welcome</i>) and taking stock of where we are now (WB2: <i>Taking Responsibility</i> , and WB3: <i>Looking Back and Forward</i>), and identifying important skills of aiming high (WB4: <i>Building Skills</i>). Award of DB1: Responsibility Taker
Practice	To be able to work independently, pupils need sufficient scaffolding and guidance. Planning a learning sequence requires keeping in mind how children will progress from being fully supported to being fully independent.	Phase 2: Curriculum Learning , activities covering planning and setting milestones and prioritising action (WB5: <i>Learning Success and Progress</i>), identifying gaps and becoming "unstuck" (WB6: <i>Addressing Curriculum Gaps</i>) Award of DB2: Skills Builder, and DB3: Reflective Learner
Reflect	An important aspect of self-regulation is reflecting on what you have done and using this to inform what you'll do in future. Targeted questions and prompts can encourage pupils to do this.	Phase 2: Curriculum Learning (continued) , activities covering strategies for learning (WB7: <i>Deepening Subject Knowledge and Skills</i>), and getting ready for tests and examinations and setting goals (WB8: <i>Preparing for Assessment</i>) Award of DB4: Strategic Learner
Review	Reviewing previous work, and retrieving key ideas from memory, aids long-term retention, particularly if this happens once you have started to forget what you have learned. The important thing here is that this is done from memory in the first instance, with resources used afterwards, as it's the retrieval process itself that strengthens long-term memory.	Phase 3: Planning the Future , activities covering the skill of staying positive, and choosing paths, identifying resources needed (WB9: <i>Imagining the Future</i>), and preparing to make a good impression, and celebrating success in the programme and in the future (WB10: <i>Preparing for the Future</i>). Award of DB5: Future Planner
Motivate	[applying to all above and running through the programme]	Award of Certification of Completion Further celebration of learning events, involving in-school recognition of success, involving peers and parents/carers.

3.4 Positive role models

The role of mentors in addressing learners' confidence and motivation is covered in the literature, including how motivation is adaptive of past and present experiences, and that "success matters". This includes supporting students to feel successful and in control, with the result that they tend to have a more positive relationship with material they are working on (Karaali, 2015, p. 442). The use of alumni and student ambassador initiatives (Sanders et al., 2018) including higher education outreach, such as the GROW programme, highlights how informal interactions allow students to develop shared "learner identities" with student ambassadors and in doing so, helping pupils understand the reality of a university education and how they themselves could belong in this

setting (Gartland, 2015). Of particular concern was the disproportionate impact on pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Nelson, Lynch and Sharp, 2021), who may be less likely to have the support of positive role models and so lack confidence about their future (Marshall, 2019).

The use of recent graduates of Sheffield Hallam University for the role of mentor was seen to have reciprocal benefits in that it was an opportunity for work experience and the development of graduate attributes and enhanced employability, as forms of ‘powerful knowledge’ (Wald and Harland, 2019). Graduate attributes (GAs) are ‘the skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable to a range of contexts’ (Barrie, 2004, p. 262). Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) identifies eight GAs: *knowledge application; motivation and engagement; social responsibility; creative and critical thinking; integrity and professionalism; research and enquiry; digital literacy; and communication*¹. GROW is designed as a Graduate Attribute Framework (Wald and Harland, 2019) that is underpinned by a theory of professional knowledge that is realised in the recognition of mentoring as professional *know that* and *know how to* (Pountney, 2019). The acquisition of this professional expertise by GMs is accredited by SHU in the work-based learning Postgraduate Certificate *Professional Practice in Mentoring in Educational Contexts*, developed by the GROW team in 2020 and offered to the GMs to supplement their training.

3.5 Collaboration and interaction

While many of the design decisions were pragmatic (for example the online nature of the mentoring), they reflect those made globally during the pandemic. Bond (2020), in a systematic review of the schools and emergency remote education in 70 countries during CV19, highlights the need for collaborative technologies that promote engagement, and the need for activities that promote interaction to decrease feelings of isolation and to keep open communication with schools.

To give an example of the type of activities that take place as part of GROW, a *Snakes and Ladders* activity is led by the GM in *Workbook 2 Taking Responsibility* in the Foundations phase (see Figure 1), a screen from a session led by a mentor with text added by the pupil). This activity is aimed at supporting the pupil to identify potential opportunities and challenges to fulfilling aspirations set out in an earlier activity. Having expressed their future aspirations (in box 20, top left – “*Health Visitor*”) the pupil is asked to identify some of the potential opportunities and challenges along the way. The pupil is then guided towards developing the skills to meet them, and to excavate what subject knowledge and skills are required, and how to achieve this. For example, in the *Curriculum Learning* phase, the mentor addresses gaps in learning in workbook 5, and in workbook 6 guides the pupil on strategies for deepening learning and developing skills. In the *Planning the Future* phase the mentor supports the pupil to think proactively about the future and to begin to prepare for it in advance.

¹ These are the main graduate attributes identifiable in SHU courses. Alongside these, the SHU Hallam Award, for extra-curricular activities, identifies 12 GAs as part of certificated persona development programme, as the defined characteristics of a Hallam Graduate.

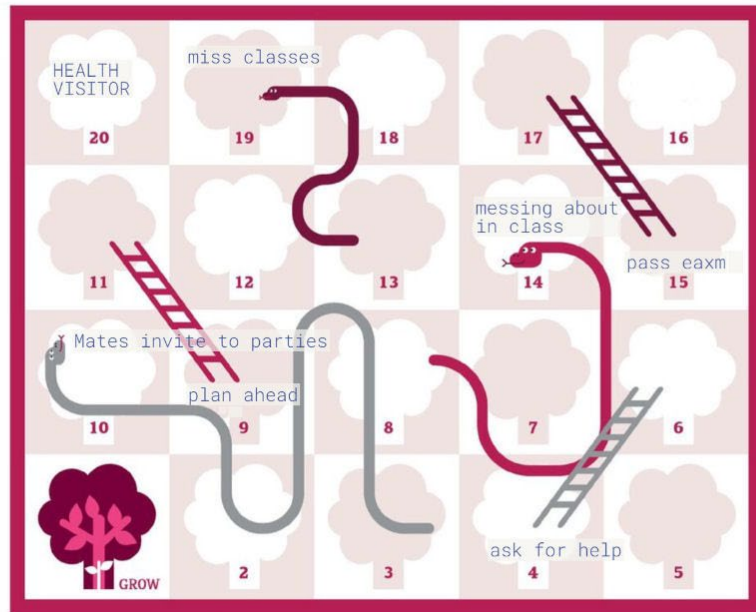


Snakes and Ladders

My Finish Square
become a health visitor

- My Ladders**
1. ask for help
 2. plan ahead
 3. pass exams

- My Snakes**
1. miss classes
 2. mess about in class
 3. hang out with mates



5

Figure 1: Sample completed activity (Workbook 2: Taking Responsibility)

4. Delivery of the GROW programme

The programme was developed in collaboration with local schools and the development of a curriculum for recovery and a programme for training mentors. It aimed to create a three-way relationship between recent Class 2020 graduates, schools, and year 10 and 11 pupils – see Figure 2. The mutual benefits included employment for recent graduates unable to find work during the pandemic, schools having to engage pupils who were mostly learning from home, and pupils supported at a crucial and unanticipated point in their education.

4.1 The format and platform for mentoring

The decision to provide mentoring online was dictated by circumstances, namely that schools were closed in March 2020, and that any solution would be online and one-to-one. The platform chosen for the online mentoring was Bramble (<https://about.bramble.io/>), a system designed for one-to-one tutoring with features that include real-time collaboration on screen, and the use of microphone and video for the participants to interact. Another plus for using Bramble was that it met the need for sessions to be recorded for safeguarding reasons, and for this recording to be available for review by teachers.

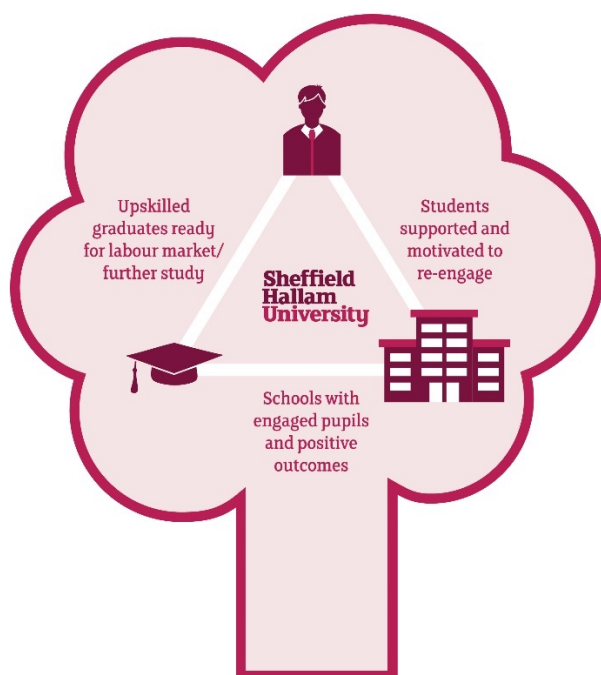


Figure 2: GROW Programme three-way collaboration and positive outcomes

4.2 Preparation of mentors

For mentors, the GROW programme consists of 25 hours of online training delivered over a week. This required them to complete a training log of their critical reflections on the key topics of their learning: safeguarding; trauma-informed approaches; mentoring strategy and theory; and metacognition and self-regulation. This course constituted a set of specialist knowledges and skills for the purpose of mentoring (Pountney, 2019). Mentors were required to apply for the course and programme, with the opportunity being advertised to 2020 graduates from local universities. Their work as mentors was paid. Mentors were also given the opportunity to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Mentoring in Educational Contexts, a university work-based learning framework programme, consisting of two 30 credit modules: the first is based on the training logs and a critical reflection; and the second on the pupil mentoring logs and a critical reflection. All graduate mentors were Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked.

4.3 Delivery of mentoring

The mentors delivered 12 sessions of mentoring to each pupil over a six-week period. The curriculum for these 12 sessions was prescribed in a one-hundred-page handbook, developed by the university team, that set out the mentoring activities, and 10 workbooks (WBs), with guidance and direction on use and setting out the protocols for the interaction. The map of the curriculum is shown in Figure 3: this shows the workbooks and the key stages of the mentoring activity, centred around the achievement of five digital badges.

Regional schools opted into the programme and put forward names of students who were willing to be mentored for a six-week period of two one-hour online sessions per week. Each school nominated a key contact for the programme, both for SHU and the mentors. Each of the 12 mentoring sessions lasted one hour, and took place online in the Bramble platform, at a time agreed with the school.

Five cohorts of students went through the GROW programme between June 2020 and April 2021, with 730 pupils from 31 schools receiving mentoring from 76 mentors trained by the programme. Table 2 shows the number of schools, mentors pupils involved, the main location (home / school) in each of the five cohorts that have taken place to date.

Cohorts 3, 4 and 5 are for one specific borough, Barnsley, and the programme has delivered mentoring to 21% of the total of year 11 pupils and 28% of the year 13 pupils.

Table 2: GROW Programme cohorts (indicative)

Cohort	Start Date (6 weeks duration)	Mentors	Schools	Pupils	Location*
1	10 June 2020	8	4	40	Home
2	9 November 2020	10	5	50	School
3	22 February 2021	20	10	200	Home
4	15 March 2021	18	2	240	School
5	26 April 2021*	20	10	200	School
Total	30 weeks	76	31	730	

* Location will vary for individual pupils who were self-isolating

In the period covered in this evaluation over 7000 workbooks were completed by pupils, over 3000 digital badges gained, and over 700 Certificates of Participation presented to pupils, either directly by teachers, or in class or year assemblies in school. Over 6000 hours of mentoring have been delivered to date.

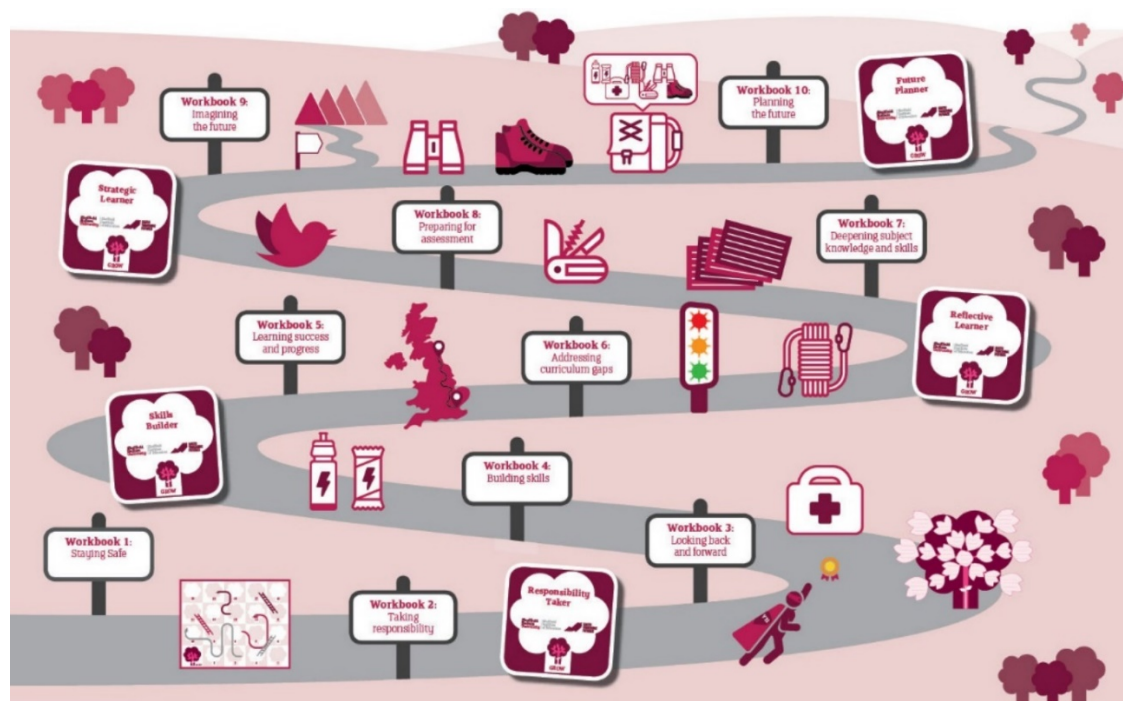


Figure 3: Curriculum map of the GROW programme

5. Evaluation methodology

We used a mixed methods approach, involving desk analysis of training and mentoring logs, and pupil workbooks, and surveys, interviews and focus groups carried out as part of data collection in June and July 2021. Table 3 shows the methods used and number of respondents from cohorts 4 and 5 who took part with their permission, and subject to standard ethical approval procedures (see appendices for a sample of information/consent forms). This aimed to gather data across several areas. Two surveys were developed, for graduate mentors and school key contacts. For the mentors these gathered information around their experiences of training and the mentoring experience. The school staff were asked questions around pupil engagement, programme completion rates and perceptions of the programme.

The survey results then informed the development of semi structured interview schedules for both mentors and school staff (see appendices for a sample). Mentors were asked the development of professional skills in mentoring and further development of graduate attributes, while school key contacts were questioned how pupils perceived and reported their experiences and effects of the mentoring. We also carried out focus groups with pupils who had received mentoring. All interviews and focus groups, with permission, were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Table 3: Evaluation data set

Types of Data	Participants (Data source)	Total
Interviews	Graduate Mentors	10
	School Key Contacts	6
Focus groups	Pupils	4
Survey	Graduate mentors	33
	School Staff	12
Graduate Mentor Training logs	Graduates completing the Postgraduate Certificate	14
Graduate Mentor Mentoring logs	Graduates completing the Postgraduate Certificate	14
Pupil workbooks	Pupils	25

6. Evaluation findings

The following sections describes the outcomes of the evaluation and draws together the survey and interview/focus group data from mentors, school staff and pupils.

6.1 The effectiveness and impact of the mentor training and resources

The training was over online (in Zoom) for one week for each cohort of mentors for a total of 25 hours, comprising a mixture of seminar presentations, activities, discussions, and collaborative and individual tasks (see for a typical programme). It was led by 5 university tutors, who also acted as mentors to the GMs during the mentoring phase. All materials were provided on the university's Blackboard virtual learning environment (VLE), and sessions were recorded. GMs were introduced to

the programme, and to safeguarding (day 1) and to the challenges of returning to school, with a strong focus on trauma-informed approaches and dealing with trauma (day 2). On day 3 they examined skills and the use of Skills Builder programme (<https://www.skillsbuilder.org>) and were introduced to mentoring and mentoring strategies. Preparing to work (online) in the school environment and becoming familiar with the mentoring workbooks and the Bramble platform was the focus on day 4. On the last day, 5, they met with a School Key Contact (SKC), nominated by each school to liaise with the GMs and to coordinate the pupils and the timetable for mentoring. At this meeting the GM and the SKC exchanged the GM profiles and background to the pupils being mentored in the following six weeks.

GMs were required to complete a training log, asking them to critically reflect on their learning at the end of each day. These logs were mandatory and were checked and signed off as complete by course tutors. In addition, GMs were asked to rate their mentoring skills and knowledge prior to the training week and at the end (0-low to 10-high) - see Table 4 – shown as an average of prior and post scores, alongside an average difference in the scores for each item.

Table 4: Perception of what mentors know and can do, prior to, and after the training

Self-evaluation of readiness (what GMs know and can do) prior to, and after, the training (0- low to 10- high)	Prior (average)	Post (average)	Increase in readiness (average)
I have a clear understanding of the aims of the GROW project	6.4	9.7	3.8
I have a clear understanding of the challenges pupils have faced and are still facing as they continue their education during lockdown and return to school	6.2	9.2	3.2
I have a clear understanding of the skills needed for successful mentoring within the GROW programme	5.8	9.5	3.8
I have a clear understanding of how GROW and its activities and material are designed to support pupils in addressing the challenges they have faced and are still facing as they continue their education during lockdown and return to school	5.1	9.2	4.3
I have a clear understanding of the people and resources that can help me to support pupils in seizing the opportunities and addressing the challenges they have faced and are still facing as they continue their education during lockdown and return to school	5.8	9.4	3.8
I have a clear understanding of my own personal strengths and resources and how I can use these to support Pupils in seizing the opportunities and addressing the challenges they have faced and are still facing as they continue their education during lockdown and return to school	6.9	9.3	2.5
I feel prepared and equipped to commence the role of Graduate Mentor in the GROW programme.	5.4	9.2	4.0

This indicates the GMs perception of the effects of the training on their understanding of the aims of GROW (+38%) and the challenges pupils have faced and are still facing during lockdown (+32%). In terms of understanding the skills needed to be a successful mentor (+38%) and of how GROW is designed to support pupils there were considerable increases in their confidence (+43%). Their

estimation of their understanding of their own personal strengths and resources (+25%) and how to make effective use of the people and resources was also high (+38%). Overall, this self-assessment indicates a strong perception of readiness to mentor by the GMs and a reasonable indication of the effects of the training to have raised this readiness by 40% between the start and the end of the training.

On the training resources and the training (see Table 5) itself there was a high estimation of the usefulness of the VLE (81.8%) and of the mentoring handbook (69.6%) and the instructional videos that accompanied each workbook (92.6%). The two digital badges gained for completing the training log and the mentoring log were seen to reasonably incentivise (66.6%), while the training logs less so (62.5%) - possibly owing to onus on GMs to complete them. However, it was stressed to GMs that the university was required to assure the schools of the quality and rigour of the training. Of the training sessions, the trauma-informed sessions, although intensive (5 hours), again were seen as important (75.8%), while the mentoring strategies sessions were less well received by those who responded, possibly because this was limited in time allowed to it (1 hour). The need for safeguarding and its importance was well received (81.2%).

Table 5: GMs' perception of the usefulness of resources and the training.

Survey Question: <i>How useful were the training activities and resources?</i>	Total	Very Useful	Useful	Neither	Useless	Very Useless
Blackboard resources	33	15	12	0	2	4
Videos introducing workbooks	27	23	2	0	1	1
Pupil and mentor profiles	31	7	6	9	7	2
How helpful was the handbook	33	19	4	2	5	3
Digital badges for mentors	30	12	8	4	3	3
Mentor training logs	32	9	11	8	4	0
Mentoring strategies and approaches sessions	17	6	6	2	2	1
Trauma-informed approaches sessions	29	18	4	1	2	4
Safeguarding sessions	32	19	7	1	3	2

6.2 The skills and knowledge gained by the mentors

Graduate mentors were asked in the survey to give their perceptions of what they gained in terms of their mentoring skills and knowledge and how this has prepared them for the next step in their careers (see Table 6). While not explicitly linked to the Graduate Attributes Framework discussed above, there are clear indicators here of positive outcomes for GMs. For example, many felt that the course had helped them in their career (71.9%) and gave them skills that would help them in further employment (74.6%). This helped them prepare for work (93.8%), increasing their confidence (94.1%), which they perceived would make them attractive to employers (94.1%).

'I was quite a shy person ... I used to get really nervous before each cohort started ... I'd be like, 'What do I say to them?' but then once we'd get into it I'd be, 'It's fine. I can do this. It's fine.' So, I think it's made me realise I can do these things and they're not going to judge me for stumbling over my words or saying something wrong'

Table 6: Graduate mentor perceptions of the effects of the programme on their skills and knowledge

Survey Question:	Total responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>How do you feel the elements of the programme affected your skills and knowledge?</i>						
The Grow programme will help me in my career	32	15	8	3	2	4
I have gained skills on the Grow programme which will help me in my career	16	11	1	0	2	2
Made me feel more prepared for work	16	11	4	0	0	1
Increased my confidence	17	11	5	0	0	1
Made me more attractive as an employee	17	11	5	0	0	1
Increased my communication skills	17	12	4	0	0	1
Made me a better mentor	31	25	3	0	2	1
Helped to develop my emotional intelligence	17	11	4	1	0	1
Helped to develop my feelings of resilience	17	10	5	1	0	1

This was perceived as having a particular impact on their communication skills (94.1%), their emotional intelligence (88.2%), their ability to mentor others (90.3%), and their own feelings of resilience (88.2%).

'I think patience, just bearing with it, coping with Bramble, and just bearing in mind that a lot of students don't really know answers straightaway, so you have to patient with them or use certain probing techniques'

'I've become a better listener and being able to just sit back and let people talk about their problems. Also, making sure that I'm more aware of how to respond to certain things and know what the right thing is to say to someone from doing the training as well.'

Several graduates declared that their experience of the programme had helped them gain employment:

'Being a mentor has broadened my understanding and experience within the education sector and has enriched my education career.'

For some, mention of their involvement had improved their job chances at interview:

'I'm [now] working in the council as a family time contact worker... I was able to tell them all my experiences of working with them [GROW] and all my previous experiences as well. So, I think that help contribute to me getting the job.'

Typical of the feedback from mentors is this comment about the impact on themselves as people, and what they want to do:

'I did film at uni, so I'd love to do something with that and then my plan was always to do something in film and then when I'm done with that become a high school teacher and teach film or media. So, this has actually helped with that. It's made me realise I want to do that.'

6.3 The effects of the mentoring programme on pupils' re-engagement with learning

The perceptions of graduate mentors as to the effects of the programme on pupils' re-engagement with learning was examined in the survey (see Table 7). In terms of helping the pupils to reengage with school following disruption, 81.8% felt this was helpful or very helpful. The activities and materials were seen to contribute to help pupils develop positive habits of work and learning (87.6%) and to help them with their future learning and career (90.6%). This perception was even higher (93.9%) for the effectiveness of the mentoring activities in helping pupils with their own personal development.

Table 7: Mentors and school staff perceptions of the effects of the mentoring programme on pupils' re-engagement with learning?

Survey Question: <i>How do you feel the programme affected pupils' (re-)engagement with school?</i>	Total responses	Very helpful	Helpful	Neither	Unhelpful	Very unhelpful
How well do you feel the activities helped the pupils return to school effectively?	33	8	19	5	0	1
How well do you feel the activities helped the pupils to develop positive habits of work and learning?	32	14	14	3	0	1
How well do you feel the activities helped the pupils with future learning and careers?	32	16	13	3	1	1
How well do you feel the activities helped the pupils with their own personal development?	33	14	17	1	0	1

There was powerful indication of the effects on pupils' communication skills:

'By the end of the programme the majority of the answers to things were full sentences and her tone was changing depending on the answer she was giving, as opposed to [at the start] it just being monotone, one or two words, or as short answers as she could give and being quite quiet with answering.'

This was noticed by the school staff:

'Building their confidence is a big thing that changed their behaviour as such in lessons and things like that. [school staff] did note that with a couple of them, like [pupil] that she's talking more in lessons.'

'A couple of the boys especially were saying that they were quite demotivated and just went into lessons and thought, well, I'll just get a grade and - they didn't understand what that grade would mean, they didn't understand thinking about going to college, they just thought,

oh, next year we'll just do an application and then we'll think about what we might want to do whereas now they think they've got more choices.'

For some pupils this had a profound effect as noted by the school key contacts:

'The pupil has said he's become so inspired by the programme that he's already started to put his own plans in place to run his own business, to start his own small business.'

'The skills around it in terms of motivation and confidence and future planning meaning that they're re-engaged in their learning and have refocused on, 'I'm doing this hairdressing course because I want to open my own salon. That's the reason why I'm doing this,' and the mentoring has helped remind them of that because they may have lost their way a little bit.'

'For some of the girls, they've now talked about having different routes, different opportunities and different ways where they can achieve the same goal. Some of them want to go to university.'

The pupils also mentioned this in the focus groups:

'We did focus a lot on having confidence in class, not being afraid to ask teachers for help and your friends for help. So, I think [the mentor] really helped me in that aspect to be more confident in the classroom and be a bit more organised.'

'[mentor] wouldn't have known that I wanted to go to university and if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be sure that I want to go to university right now without him telling me what it would be like to go to university and answering a lot of the questions that I had that nobody else could really answer.'

'I think I've got a clearer view of my future. Not a set view, but I know what kind of path I want to go down and I know it's okay to change that as well.'

As well as the effects on pupils' awareness and confidence in their future, there were indications that the programme had an effect on behaviour. On school key contact observed:

'I think the boys, because we had two female mentors especially, they developed a maturity where they can have a good meaningful conversation about life and the future without it having to descend into a lad's lad conversation and I think they got quite a lot out of that side of it.'

One effect was on self-regulation and attitudes to school, as noted by the teachers:

'At home, like you said, they don't get much attention. What attention they were getting was very negative because it was very negative from a school perspective because school was previously phoning home with negative phone calls, parents weren't engaging, didn't want to engage with school because all they were expecting was negative and now the parents are really on board because all they're getting is positive calls. They're saying the students are different at home, their behaviours have improved at home as well as in school. It's been a real positive all round.'

'His behaviour was so poor previously ... since joining the programme he's had exclusions weekly but his whole mannerism and his behaviour towards not just himself, not just to peers but staff within the classroom and his comment was when I said to him what did you think you got from actually doing the programme, he said he's learnt how to communicate in a more positive way He said getting up in the morning and coming to school, his whole attitude had changed, his parents have noticed a change in him, he felt positive coming into school and being in school and he just feels now that he's more able than what he initially thought.'

There were also strong indicators of the development of pupils' metacognitive strategies, including the metacognitive voice, as reported by school key contacts:

'Some of the set one, set two girls have managed to think slightly more outside the box than they had previously, and I think they needed that. They sort of need almost the permission to veer from the path, to find what they should do and how they should do it and there are other ways to achieve their end goal, no matter what that is.'

'Thinking about responsibility, organisational skills, they are the fundamental building blocks and even the students who think they've got it, actually there are probably strategies that they've covered in GROW that they haven't come across before and certainly our high flyers, and we did have some of our high flyers on GROW, they're kind of unconsciously competent, where they're really good at what they do, but they have no idea why, it's just always worked for them. So, actually looking at these strategies can help save them from a pitfall in the future... I know a lot of our students would come out of the session saying, 'I've learnt about this tool today and that was really, really useful.'

This was echoed by pupils, talking about the mentoring activities:

'So, there was a traffic light activity and you had to put your subject and your weaknesses for each one into it and I found that really helpful because I'm not always good at pointing out my weaker points in a subject, but then when I thought into it more, it did help.'

'When we did the revision timetable, we filtered it in so it was exam technique and active recall. So, we were getting a bit of everything in, rather than just recalling things that wouldn't actually help in exam circumstances.'

'I can remember one that I enjoyed where it was predicting your own grades or something like that. You're looking at your own progression and how you think you've progressed.'

Pupils and mentors spoke of a relationship that was different to the one between pupil and teacher:

'I didn't need to explain everything all over again and I felt like I had someone who could empathise with me. So, she was trying to say, 'It's okay. It will get better.'

'I think just having that person to talk to. You don't get the teacher to talk to as often.'

6.4 The effectiveness of the design of the programme and the curriculum

Mentors spoke highly of the structure and the quality of the materials (see Table 8), but also how the training and the support of the tutor (81.9%) and the school contact (70%) was effective in helping them be flexible and adaptive to the needs of the pupils. The value of the materials to build the relationship with the pupil (86.2%), in supporting strategic learning (79.3%) and supporting planning for the future (89.7%) was clear. The Bramble platform was seen as effective in enabling the mentor to communicate with the pupil (80.6%), in building trust (87.1%) and in establishing rapport (81.3%).

The importance of building a relationship was recognised by mentors, including: ‘... just spending that time getting to know each other’, and ‘using your personal experiences’ and ‘being closer in age to the pupil than most teachers’.

Table 8: Effectiveness of the design of the programme in preparing graduates for working with pupil mentees and for building trust and encouraging dialogue

Survey Question:	Total responses	Very Effective	Effective	Neither	Not Effective	Very ineffective
<i>How effective was the design of the programme for helping you work with pupils and to establish trust and rapport?</i>						
How successful was phase 1 (workbooks 1-4) at building relationships?	29	17	8	3	1	0
How successful was phase 2 (workbooks 5-8) at supporting strategic learning?	29	12	11	5	0	1
How successful was phase 3 (workbooks 9,10) at supporting planning for the future?	29	14	12	0	1	2
How effective was it having a tutor mentor?	33	25	2	0	4	2
How effective was it having a School Key Contact?	30	18	3	6	2	1
Do you feel your pupil trusted you?	31	16	11	1	3	0
How easy was it to develop rapport with your pupils?	32	11	15	3	3	0
How well were you able to communicate effectively in Bramble with your pupils?	31	13	12	5	1	0

Being adaptive also was seen as important by mentors and pupils:

‘I’d say, ‘Right. Let’s move on.’ He said, ‘Am I being rude?’ and I said, ‘No. This programme is flexible and adaptable. There is no point me sitting here going through this workbook and you coming out at the other end saying, ‘I knew all that and I got absolutely nothing out of that session’ so we only do what you need, and you tell me what you need.’

Pupils were well aware of this when talking about the mentor in the focus groups:

'When you've got that kind of dynamic with somebody, you can just talk to them about anything. We have ridiculous tangents. We'd go from the workbook to something completely different.'

'It was really interactive. I was pleasantly surprised by that. It was really interactive and user friendly.'

Schools recognised how well the programme was tailored to pupils needs and spoke about it in interview:

'GROW is a bespoke programme, yes there are the booklets, yes there's the programme, all of that's set up and it's wonderful, but the fact that the mentors could meet their student, talk to them, tailor the programme around them and give the student exactly what they need at that moment, that is the magical bit of GROW because it's not just a mentor going, 'We're going to do book one. We're going to do book two. We're going to do book three,' no matter what the student wants. They absolutely tailored every single experience to what that student needed at that point and that is the absolute power of this programme.'

7. Conclusion and recommendations

Taking the research questions in turn, the findings are summarised, and key recommendations are made.

7.1 What skills and knowledge have graduates gained in the training and mentoring programmes and how has it supported their readiness for the next step in their career?

GMs expressed strong agreement on the positive effects of both the training and the mentoring experience on skills and knowledge and how this has prepared them for the next step in their careers. There is anecdotal evidence of a considerable number of students reporting success in finding employment and that being able to talk about their experience in their applications and at interview.

Recommendation 1: track graduate mentors next steps and follow up in 6 months

GMs reported the importance of a team ethic, using WhatsApp to share ideas and support each other. They valued the contribution of mentors who have been involved in previous cohorts as providing the 'real' experience of mentoring.

Recommendation 2: encourage experienced mentors to take part as mentoring 'buddies' in the training and working alongside new mentors in schools.

The 14 GMs that completed the Postgraduate Certificate reported higher levels of insight on their training and mentoring practice and were able to deepen their professional knowledge and to gain academic credit for this work. The first cohort were able to test and demonstrate proof of concept.

Recommendation 3: revise the PG Certificate, building on the success of the first cohort, and offer to all GMs participating, to provide professional recognition for their mentoring practice and to raise the status of this professional role.

7.2 How do mentors and school staff perceive the effects of the mentoring programme on pupils' re-engagement with learning?

Schools were impressed (and pupils grateful for) the GMs' ability to be flexible in their approach and to adapt the materials to the needs of the learners.

Recommendation 4: provide more time in the training for GMs to become familiar and practised in the use of the materials and provide case studies to illustrate how the materials can be used, including those for trauma-informed approaches.

It is clear that the curriculum provides a structure and a focus, reinforcing the metacognitive and self-regulative principle that guides the programme, and the requirement that metacognition needs to be about something. However, the busy nature of schools meant that pupils missed sessions, affecting continuity.

Recommendation 5: provide criteria for GMs to support decisions on both accommodating gaps in the sessions and the minimum requirements for pupils to achieve digital badges and the certificate of completion.

The perceptions of school staff of the effects on pupils' participation in the programme and engagement with learning include increased confidence, a greater sense of belonging, improved habits of work and learning and academic resilience. This is supported by the accounts of pupils and in the analysis of the completed workbooks.

Recommendation 6: provide guidance and support for the analysis of recorded sessions by individual GMs, and across the cohort, using the tools available in the Bramble platform.

7.3 How effective is the design of the programme in preparing graduates for working with pupil mentees and how is online mentoring as a method of building trust perceived?

Issues reported by GMs include the practical issues of timetabling and using the resources, as well as the time pressures on managing the mentoring sessions.

Recommendation 7: introduce a mentor tracking system that reduces the pressure on GMs to keep records, and which logs pupil attendance, workbook progress and badge awards. This can also feed into an overall spreadsheet which shows progress across all settings and gathers statistical data.

The three-way design of the programme, linking mentors, the pupils and key school staff, was a crucial element in the success of the programme and in building trust and rapport. Where the school contact was able to communicate and meet with the GMs regularly a higher level of completion by pupils was seen.

Recommendation 8: disseminate the effects of the programme to schools at the initial liaison meetings, alongside the level of commitment needed in terms of time and responsibilities and support the school staff in this role, and emphasise the importance of the weekly meetings between SKC and GM.

Recommendation 9: appoint a full-time member of academic staff to oversee the coordination of the programme and a Project Manager to manage the administration, including a central record of weekly school meeting, as well as recording receipt of school compliance documentation.

The intention is to run further cohorts in South Yorkshire schools in 2021-22 that take forward these recommendations and build on the success of the programme. A further evaluation of the GROW programme and its impacts will build on this report and examine further its impact.

Recommendation 10: further evaluation of GROW should be made to examine the pupil-mentor interactions, pupil learning and the development of graduate attributes

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Appendices

Information sheet and consent form GROW Graduate Mentors

Information about the GROW Programme Evaluation

You are taking part in the GROW Mentoring Programme as a **Graduate Mentor (GM)**.

As part of the programme, we are carrying out an evaluation. The aim is to help us to understand how and why elements of the programme have worked well, or not so well, and to help us improve the programme going forward. Therefore, we want to gather information about your experience of being a mentor, including the training you have undertaken, your sessions with the mentee pupils, where you think you have been able to support them and any challenges you have faced.

What will the evaluation involve?

For the evaluation, we may ask you to do one or more of the following:

- complete a questionnaire at the end of the programme;
- participate in an interview or focus group with a researcher, these will last around 30 minutes, and will take place at a time convenient to you. With your permission, interviews and focus groups will be recorded using an audio recorder and may be transcribed;
- allow us to access your mentoring logs and critical reflections on mentoring.

As part of being a Graduate Mentor on the GROW programme you are required to keep the workbooks and to complete mentoring logs and critical reflections on sessions as part of your mentoring duties. With your permission these will be accessed by project staff and evaluators. In doing this we hope to understand how you view your development as a mentor and of your role in the project in supporting the pupil mentees.

Interviews will be carried out by an experienced researcher from Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. With your permission, interviews and focus groups will be recorded using an audio recorder and may be transcribed. The interview or its transcription will be shared with the researchers involved in the evaluation. All data will be stored in secure password-protected computers in Sheffield Hallam University.

If you decide not to participate in the research it will not affect your place on the programme.

The information gathered for the evaluation will be shared with project stakeholders and used for the purposes of understanding the impact of the GROW programme. If you wish to withdraw any data you have already provided you can contact the evaluation lead within two weeks of taking part in an interview or focus group. After this time, your data will have been anonymised and collated with data from other participants for analysis.

Will I be identifiable?

All reports, and academic research publications, will anonymise individuals in order that no individual participant or school will be identified or identifiable.

For the purposes of research and knowledge exchange including presentations at professional or academic conferences, or publications in professional or academic journals, the retention period for the anonymised data will be 10 years after the last publication arising from the research. The anonymised data may be used for other research purposes, for example for reanalysis of data to further illuminate the mentor/mentee relationship.

How will my information be used?

The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of **public tasks that are in the public interest**. A full statement of your rights can be found at <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>. All University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately, and their rights respected. This study was approved by the University. Further information can be found here <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice>.

Interviews will be recorded so that the researcher can listen back and ensure they haven't missed anything you have said. Anything you say to the interviewer or on the questionnaires will be treated in confidence and all data will be anonymised: neither you nor your organisation will be named in any publicly available reports, except with your and your school's permission.

This will comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in accordance with the university Data Protection Policy Statement: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>

<p>You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• you have a query about how your data is used by the University• you would like to report a data security breach (e.g., if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)• you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk	<p>You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill - a.macaskill@shu.ac.uk) if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated
<p>Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT Telephone: 0114 225 5555</p>	

Our evaluation of the programme will be completed by the end of October 2021.

If you have any further questions about the evaluation, please ask:

Dr Richard Pountney - evaluation lead – r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk

Participant consent form

If you are happy to take part in the various activities involved in the evaluation of the GROW programme, please complete the following consent form and return it to your facilitator.

Please answer the following questions by circling, or highlighting, your responses:

I have read and understood the information sheet about this evaluation	YES	NO
I have received enough information about the evaluation to allow me to decide whether or not to take part	YES	NO
I understand that I am able to ask for further clarification from the interviewer before the start of any data collection and can decide not to continue at that point	YES	NO
I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study within two weeks of taking part in an interview, focus group or survey and that this does not affect my participation in the programme	YES	NO
I understand that project staff may access session materials, mentoring logs and critical reflections on sessions and that I may withdraw this consent at any time.	YES	NO
I understand that, in the write-up of the evaluation or other research that draws the data collected for this evaluation, my contributions will be anonymised	YES	NO
I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.	YES	NO
I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, including contributions to workshops, sessions, webinars, surveys and during interviews, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.	YES	NO
I consent to the audio recording of interview/s and/or focus groups	YES	NO
I understand that choosing 'yes' to the above questions and signing this consent form will be taken as my written consent to taking part in interviews/focus groups and for mentoring sessions, mentoring logs and critical reflections on sessions to be used for research purposes, once anonymised.	YES	NO

By signing below, you indicate that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this study having read and understood the information in the sheet for participants. It will also indicate that you have had adequate opportunity to discuss the study and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

Thank you for agreeing to take part!

Signature of participant:

Date:

Name (block letters):

Contact email address:

Contact telephone number:

Pupil Information Sheet

GROW Mentoring Programme Evaluation



You have taken part in the GROW Mentoring Programme working with a **Graduate Mentor** provided by Sheffield Hallam University. Now that you have completed the programme, we are carrying out an evaluation. The aim is to help us to understand how well the elements of the programme have worked, so that we can improve the programme. Therefore, we want to gather information about your experience of the programme and being mentored.

What will the evaluation involve?

Your school has agreed to be part of the evaluation, and to pass this information sheet to you. We are therefore contacting you as a student who took part in the GROW Programme, to ask you to take part, in school, in an online [TEAMS or similar] **focus group** (with a small number of other students) or a **1:1 interview** (this could be by phone), lasting between 30-45 minutes to share your thoughts on the experience. We would like to ask you what you thought of the mentoring, and if you think it's helped you at all.

See <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/grow> for more information about the programme.

This evaluation has been checked and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). In summary:

- Despite you and your parent/guardian signing a consent form agreeing to be mentored at the beginning of the programme - the decision to be interviewed or to take part in a focus group is still your choice. You can decide to not be involved and/or withdraw from the focus group/interview without giving a reason.
- Before we audio-record the focus group/interview we will ask for your verbal consent as well.
- Your name will not be used in any reports or in any related academic publications.
- If you decide that, following your interview/focus group you wish to withdraw your data, you will need to contact the named researcher detailed at the bottom of this information sheet within 14 days of the data collection (i.e., up to 14 days after the interview/focus group).

What happens next?

We will arrange with your teacher to agree a time, during the school day, when we can hold the focus group or interview. This will take place in a quiet room, in school, possibly with a teacher present. The meeting will be recorded, and your answers and comments will be transcribed and collated with those of other students, into a summary, that we will use to write an evaluation report. It is important that you know that we are evaluating the programme, not you or your teacher or the school. The findings from the report may be disseminated at educational research conferences and in academic or professional journals. No individual students, staff or schools will be named in these reports.

If you require further information about this evaluation, please contact:

Jo Booth (dsjb9@hallam.shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 3785) or

Richard Pountney (r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6288)

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS INFORMATION SHEET

GROW Mentoring Programme – School Key Contact Interview (indicative schedule)

Semi-structured Questions (starters, allowing for follow-up where appropriate)

- Can you say a little about your role in school?
- Why were you the person nominated to be the school key contact? How did you feel about that at the time? How do you feel now? Why is that?
- Which age group were your pupils? Do you feel they needed specific help at the time?
- What do you think the effects of CV19 were on pupils / the school / yourself? How is that now?
- How did you /school decide which students to put forward for the programme. How did they respond when you asked/ told them?
- How do you feel pupils felt about the first sessions – did this change over time? Why do you think that was?
- Do you think there were any type of pupil that gained more from the programme? Why do you think that was?
- Do you think there was any aspect of the programme that was more successful? Less successful? Why do you think that was?
- What did you think about the programme when you first heard about it? Did you think it would work? Why was that? What do you think now?
- I want to ask you about specific aspects of the programme. What did you think of the idea of digital badges when you first heard of them? How were they thought of by pupils do you think?
- I am showing you the structure of the programme and the three phases. Do you feel any was more effective than the others?
- How useful do you feel the sessions on metacognitive strategies was in helping with assessment. Why do you think that was? Can you think of any specific pupils (you can use names we will remove those later)?
- Do you feel the programme might have affected how pupils thought about the future? In what ways? Can you think of any specific examples?
- Do you think it affected pupils learning at all? Can you give some examples?
- Do you think you might repeat any aspects of the programme yourself / the school? Which ones? Why is that?
- Is there anything you want to raise with me?

GROW Mentoring Programme – Pupil Focus Group (indicative schedule)

Semi-structured Questions (starters, allowing for follow-up where appropriate)

- [interviewer introduces themselves explains briefly what is going to happen and why and checks verbal consent for participation]
- Can we go round and briefly introduce ourselves?
- What do you remember about when schools closed last year? Anything stick out in your memory about that last April?
- Can anyone say roughly how often they were out of school this year? What was that like?
- How did you get on with the online lessons?
- Why did you agree to take part in the GROW programme? What were you expecting?
- Say a little about what happened when you met the mentor. Anything stick out in your memory about those early meetings?
- Was it what you expected? Why / Why not?
- Did you complete the badges / get the certificate? What did you think of this?
- What about doing this online? What was that like [follow up where appropriate on use of Bramble, tech problems, the workbooks ...]?
- Do you feel your mentor got to know you at all? Say a little about that ...
- What were the best things about the programme for you?
- What were the worst things?
- Do you feel the programme helped you in any way [follow up where appropriate on effects on how they felt about the disruption to learning, effects on getting back into school, getting ready for exams ...]?
- How do you feel about the future now?
- Would you recommend the programme to your friends? Why / why not?
- Is there anything you want to say about the programme that we haven't discussed?