



Mutual Mentoring with Conviction

**An Evaluation and
Lessons Learned from
the December 2020
Pilot**

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Acknowledgments

We want to begin with a huge thank you to our eleven young mentors that took part in this programme, who really energised the process and made the programme the success it turned out to be.

This programme would not have been possible without the support of our partners - Deloitte, StandOut, Trailblazers and Breakthrough. Deloitte were exceptional in helping us to transform this ambitious idea into a reality in record-breaking time. Initial conversations about this programme began in August and we managed to kick off in late October with a fantastic group of senior and engaged Deloitte mentors. Secondly, thanks to our charity partners Trailblazers and StandOut, who supported the recruitment of the young mentors and continued to work with them throughout the programme. Thank you to Trailblazers, who supported the onboarding of the Deloitte mentors. Special thanks to StandOut, who provided insight and advice throughout and gave our recruitment drive a fantastic boost. Huge thank you to Breakthrough who were able to step in at the last minute to drive the successful execution of the programme and who authored this report.

Our collaboration with Deloitte was founded on their 5 Million Futures (5MF) partnership - Deloitte North South Europe's (NSE) social impact strategy, aiming to help five million people get to where they want to be through access to education and employment. 5MF seeks to address inequality by overcoming barriers to education and employment, empowering individuals with the skills needed to succeed in today's economy.

Focused on inclusion and aligned to the UN's Sustainable Development goals, 5MF is part of Deloitte's Global WorldClass commitment to empower 50 million people by 2030. This is one of the ways Deloitte are bringing this purpose to life by making an impact that matters.

Trailblazers Mentoring is a national charity with over 20 years' of experience in mentoring young prison leavers (18-25) with the primary objective of helping them to reduce their chances of reoffending. This purpose is achieved through weekly one to one mentoring sessions with a trained volunteer mentor. The mentoring begins inside prison, and continues 'through the gate' after people leave prison, and as long as is needed in the community. Trailblazers aim to educate, engage, inspire their mentees to change their future and make a positive impact on their communities.
www.trailblazersmentoring.org.uk.

StandOut, a London-based charity, runs a four-week coaching course for people preparing to leave prison, followed by one to one support offered after release for as long as is required. In response to Covid-19, StandOut expanded to run a helpline offering practical support and coaching to more people leaving prison in London. StandOut empowers people with the resilience and mindsets needed for lasting stability and employment. www.standout.org.uk.

Breakthrough is a training provider that recruits future leaders directly from our prison system with the aim of having more people with experience of the criminal justice system in influential positions. The opportunities that are available to prison leavers are often very narrow which often leads to the disengagement of prison leavers in the job market. This also means that many large organisations cannot access this innovative and high quality talent. Breakthrough works inside and outside prison to provide training and Business apprenticeships to prison leavers. This training is complemented by collaborating with employers to maximise the value of their apprenticeship levy and support the integration of this diverse talent.

www.wearebreakthrough.org

We would also like to name the key people involved in this programme, although we know there were people beyond this list who made this a success. Our thanks go to...

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Sarah Deeming, Trailblazers PM
Emma Turner, Trailblazers PM
Martha Morey – Trailblazers PM
Dot Lister, Trailblazers Volunteer
Rachel Austin, Masterclass Facilitators, Deloitte
John Thompson, Masterclass Facilitators, Deloitte
Shakila Wells, Masterclass Facilitators, Deloitte
Karen Paginton, Masterclass Facilitators, Deloitte
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Executive Summary

Cracked It, established in 2015, decided to “[achieve, not survive](#)” in September 2020; communicating that doors would close from 1st January 2021 and that legacy projects would be initiated to seed long-term change empowering people with convictions to thrive. Mutual Mentoring was one of those legacy projects. Mutual Mentoring occurs when both parties in a relationship are responsible for mentoring the other party. Whilst also receiving mentoring support themselves, this method offers acknowledgement of the skills and expertise both parties can bring to the table.

This Mutual Mentoring programme involved 11 pairs of mentors - each with one young prison-leaver and one corporate mentor. The former would be a young person with lived-experience of prison and, the latter, a senior Deloitte partner or employee with influence over HR policies. All pairs embarked on a short four-week pilot mentoring programme, with weekly sessions, designed and managed by Cracked It with support from our partners.

The objectives of this programme were broad; the core purpose was to assess whether Mutual Mentoring could influence corporate HR decision-makers to increase access to employment for prison leavers, especially igniting a drive to remove restrictive HR- policies for people with convictions. The broader objectives, including the longer term benefits for the young people are discussed in this report.

The evaluation of the programme shows it exceeded expectations for what can be achieved in such a short period of time. The young people increased their confidence in their abilities and their access to the corporate job market and “loved every minute of it”. The corporate mentors had a real drive to action the injustice they saw with the barriers to employment for these young prison leavers; “I think everyone should be given another opportunity and my interactions with my young mentor demonstrated that he is bright and capable and inspirational and there is no reason to think otherwise”.

This report is a summary of why we embarked on this Mutual Mentoring programme, how we did it and whether it worked. However, this is just the beginning for Mutual Mentoring. Deloitte, our corporate partners, are in the process of evaluating how they can effectively support prison leavers based on their experience so far. They are continuing the Mutual Mentoring programme for all those who want to continue and are considering inviting young prison leavers into specific corporate events to raise awareness and engagement beyond those 15 mentors involved to date. Breakthrough, the delivery partner of Cracked It and the author of this report, is preparing to roll out Mutual Mentoring to other corporate organisations who have already shown interest. This legacy project from Cracked It is one step along the longer journey to drive better outcomes for prison leavers and removing corporate barriers to employment.

We want this report to stimulate questions and ideas; please get in touch with Breakthrough (dee@wearebreakthrough.org) if you have any questions or would like any further details and they will make sure you are connected to the right people.

Why Did We Do It?

What Specific Problem Were We Looking To Address?

Prison is failing people with convictions and is failing society. 47% of people who have been incarcerated return to prison within a year. This negatively impacts the individuals and their families, in addition to any other victims, the community and our economy at large, since reoffending costs over £18bn per year (1). With prison numbers increased by 84% since 1990, to c. 83,000 people incarcerated in England and Wales, this problem is getting worse (2). (Note: Prison numbers have decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic, due to delays in the system and there has been no significant policy change to make us think this will be reflective of a longer term decrease.) One of the most predictable variables that determines whether people end up in prison is their parent's salary, which really challenges preconceptions of who is in our prisons (3).

The evidence that employment reduces reoffending rates is overwhelming and consistent. On average, 40% of prison leavers reoffend within the first 12 months, yet these re-offending rates are reduced by 10% for prison leavers who are employed within 12 months (4). We know that rates of reoffending are too high. We know that employment reduces it, along with the other positive elements of employment from a social and wellbeing perspective. However, only 17% of prison leavers are in full-time employment within one year of release (5).

47%

Of people incarcerated return to prison in a year

18BN

Pounds a year is the cost of reoffending

75%

Of employers discriminate against ex-offenders

10%

Reduction in reoffending rates when employed within 12 months

17%

Of prison leavers in full-time employment after 1 year of release

This report will not go into detail on the context or the reasons for the low employment rates; this has been widely reported elsewhere (6, 7). There are a multitude of reasons leading to the lower employment rates seen in prison leavers compared to their peers, including very striking factors such as inaccessibility of educational attainment and barriers to employment for people with convictions. 42% of people in prison have been excluded from school (8). 75% of employers discriminate against job applicants with prior convictions (9). A nuance that is less widely discussed is that people in prison who had regular social visits from friends and family on the outside are consistently less likely to re-offend (10).

This phenomenon isn't exclusive to prison leavers. One of the main drivers of higher wages and better health outcomes in people from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds is their social network. When over 80% of job vacancies are filled through social network connections, this becomes a huge barrier to employment (11). Research from the Education and Employers Taskforce found that a young person who has four or more meaningful encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be out of education, employment or training and can earn up to 22% more during their career.



42% of people in prison were excluded from school.



Those who had regular visits from family and friends are less likely to reoffend



80% of job vacancies are filled through social network.

Why do we think mutual mentoring can address this problem?

There are many successful mentoring programmes that support people in prison and upon release. These are often very varied in terms of the mentors' backgrounds; a diversity that could be considered a strength.

Mutual Mentoring occurs when both parties in a relationship are responsible for mentoring the other party. Whilst also receiving mentoring support themselves, this method offers acknowledgement of the skills and expertise both parties can bring to the table. Specifically, by grouping senior corporate executives with prison leavers, the former can share knowledge and contacts of the job and opportunity market whilst the latter can share their life experience and understanding of the barriers to employment. This reciprocal benefit is what defines the Mutual Mentoring relationship.

Mutual Mentoring looks to address two specific challenges for rehabilitating prison leavers in a programme: the barriers employers have to employing prison leavers and the social network of prison leavers.

Our Mutual Mentoring programme is unique. The aim of this programme is to create long-term, systemic change by changing corporate hearts and minds about prison leavers and shedding light on the talent, humanity and commitment behind a criminal conviction. This is with a view to dismantling the corporate attitudinal barriers to employment for people with criminal convictions (and the potentially stifling HR practices that flow from them), in addition to enhancing opportunities for the prison leavers involved.

What Are Our Objectives?

Objectives Of Our Mutual Mentoring Programme:

Connect

Young people with corporate contacts to build their confidence and grow their networks and opportunities.

Raising Awareness

Among decision makers of the risk factors that lead young people to commit crime, and the challenges to accessing stable employment.

Influence

Decision makers to remove bureaucratic barriers to employment and create opportunities for those with convictions.

Why Was Cracked It Well Positioned To Deliver This Programme?

Cracked It was uniquely positioned to design and deliver the Mutual Mentoring programme with its experience and network working with large corporates and young prison leavers. Cracked It has worked with some of the world's largest employers to create opportunities for over 200 young prison leavers and young people at risk of offending. Cracked It had a track record of delivering award-winning pop-up mobile phone repair clinics within these large organisations whilst also supporting young people through a successful employability programme.



How Did We Do It?

The programme can be divided into five phases, although many elements overlap and interconnect.

1. Design

The design of the programme involved our charity partners, Deloitte and our young people. Our target groups were defined as young people with experience of the criminal justice system who are not in permanent work/ not working in the field they want to, and corporate Deloitte partners/ employees in significant decision-making roles and in a position to influence HR policy. With them, we developed four mentoring sessions and associated materials (e.g. worksheets). Based on our objectives, we then defined the evaluation process for the programme. This included a pre-programme and post-programme questionnaire to capture the baseline and end state against some key statements. For example, “I feel like large corporate organisations would listen to my ideas, opinions and suggestions” and “I know what I need to do to get the kind of work I want” for the young people and “I feel comfortable working with people with criminal records” and “I am aware of the barriers to employment for people with a criminal record” for our corporate mentors.

2. Recruit

We worked closely with our partners, Trailblazers and StandOut, to recruit 11 young men and, with the Deloitte central team, to recruit 15 corporate mentors. All corporate mentors received one hour of on-boarding to explain the programme, give context on the background of the young people and safeguarding awareness training. All of the young people were on-boarded individually by their project manager or coach. We shared the pre-programme questionnaire with Deloitte and young people mentors and tracked completion.



Figure 1.

3. Execute

We launched the programme by sharing the mentor details with both parties and sharing the resources for all the sessions. The completion of the mentoring sessions was tracked by session report forms from Deloitte and informal check-ins with the young people. This also gave us insight into how things were progressing and meant we could support the mentors as needed in a timely fashion. There were weekly meetings with charity partners and the Deloitte team to go through status, issues and upcoming events. In addition to this, Deloitte arranged four masterclasses covering various topics, such as Financial Management, which were available to the young people in the programme and other prison leavers from the charity partners. As to be expected, there was a significant amount of project management and coordination across the different mentors and partners to align on approach to delayed sessions, masterclasses and events.

4. Celebrate

A really important part of any programme is to take some time to breathe out, reflect and celebrate its success. A one-hour Zoom celebration event was arranged and everyone who had been involved in the programme was invited. In addition to celebrating the mentors who had completed the programme so far, the celebration included giving thanks to everyone, separating into two breakout rooms to reflect on the programme and discussing plans for the future.

5. Evaluate

This programme was a four-week pilot with the desired outcome of being able to communicate an evidence base for impact and key lessons learned so it could support the extension and broader roll out of Mutual Mentoring that serves our original aims. Therefore, evaluation of the programme is important for expanding the positive impact. The session reports, celebration event and post-programme questionnaires were the sources for this evaluation report. Evaluation is quantitative, using the key statements outlined above and qualitative, using quotes to bring to life the impact and importance of this programme to both the young and the corporate mentors.

Did The Programme Work?

The programme's main focus was to drive change in corporate attitudes about prison leavers, in an effort to spark changes in HR practices that govern their recruitment.

This section has been split into two sections. Firstly, reflections from the large corporate (Deloitte) perspective to understand the potential for systemic change. The second section specifically focuses on the outcomes of the young people involved.

We conducted qualitative and quantitative assessments to gather insights to help us to understand our impact against the objectives. These were in the form of questionnaires before and after the programme to the young and corporate mentors. We also conducted interviews and informal reflection discussions and the mentors completed session reports; these allowed us to capture additional context in the form of quotes and understand other benefits and challenges that were presented beyond the specific scope of the outlined objectives. For the quantitative analysis, we asked the young and corporate mentors to respond to the same statements before and after the pilot programme. The responses were on a five-point scale (from 1 - Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree); the presented analysis reflects the movement of the responses before and after the programme.

We had 11 pairs of mentors start the programme, two mentor pairs paused and one mentor pair wasn't able to finish their sessions before this report was published, but is now continuing. Therefore information was gathered from the eight mentor pairs who had finished the programme. We had seven pre- and eight post-programme questionnaire responses from the young mentors and ten pre- and six post-programme questionnaire responses from corporate mentors.

Did The Programme Work For Our Corporate Objectives?

The Objectives We Set For Our Corporate Partners Were:

Raise Awareness

Among decision makers of the risk factors that lead young people to commit crime

Raise Understanding

Of the challenges to accessing stable employment

Influence

Decision makers to remove bureaucratic barriers to employment and create opportunities for those with convictions

These objectives align with our broader goals of providing equal opportunities for meaningful employment for those with convictions and removing any misconceptions the public have, thereby allowing the economic and societal potential of employing prison leavers to be realised.

We made distinct progress, to differing degrees, on each of the objectives we set out to achieve, which will be explored here. The final objective - Influence decision makers to remove bureaucratic barriers to employment and create opportunities for those with convictions - was where this programme had the biggest impact. It has been remarkable how much energy and drive there has been from the senior Deloitte decision makers to influence access to employment and opportunities for young prison leavers after the short programme. The corporate mentors were consistently impressed by their young mentors; “he is bright and capable and inspirational and there is no reason to think otherwise” and “[he] is an amazing young individual doing great things already and has huge potential to impact society in a positive way”.

We improved the average score against all the questions that were asked to the corporate mentors. There are four statements that are of interest to explore further:

*"My experience with my mentee has confirmed what I had previously thought and that is a) people deserve a second chance and without that we run the risk that offenders get stuck in a place where they have no choice but to re-offend; and b) that preconceptions about offenders are often wrong - so for example, my mentee was articulate, well educated and full of potential which I suspect is not what most people would expect."
- Corporate Mentor*

"I know how to support my organisation to become more inclusive towards people with criminal records"



This was the statement where the respondents' agreement increased the most. This could be considered surprising as the programme didn't include elements of training on how to become more inclusive. Reviewing the additional context here, there are two driving factors that influenced the change in this score. Primarily, the corporate mentors were inspired by their young mentors to understand more about what the barriers were and began conversations with relevant HR professionals in Deloitte to influence this process going forward. This is a useful insight for organisations that are looking to drive change in recruitment practices. Secondly, by working with and understanding the young mentors better, the corporate mentors had a better understanding of the barriers to recruitment and retention from their perspective.

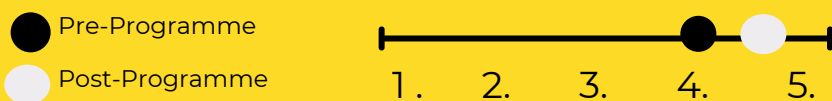
"I Feel Comfortable Working With People With Criminal Records"



This had respondents' agreement increased compared to before the programme. The relatively small increase, compared to other statements, is reflective of the high starting point - the corporate mentors that were involved in the pilot were already interested in learning more and understanding what could be done to improve opportunities for young prison leavers.

These measures will be interesting to analyse when we have a more diverse range of starting views on prison leavers. It is important that future programmes include those corporate mentors that are less comfortable working with prison leavers to raise awareness with a broader range of stakeholders.

“I want to help my organisation become more inclusive towards people with criminal records”



This had respondents' agreement increase compared to before the programme. This relatively small change, again is due to the high starting point for this group of mentors. However, importantly, a key driver of the response here was a sense that the barriers are not owned by Deloitte “Need to influence professional bodies, who in turn need to influence public and client perceptions” and many of the barriers are forced upon us by other organisations in our ecosphere”. It is clear that change in policy for organisations like Deloitte will be a collaborative effort across a range of organisations and their regulators.

“I am aware of the risk factors that contribute to the likelihood of someone experiencing the criminal justice system”



This had respondents' agreement increase compared to before the programme, but with a relatively low starting point and end point. The main reflection for this was that four sessions isn't enough on the part of the young mentors or the Deloitte mentors to delve deeper into personal topics; “lots more to learn - four sessions on this isn't enough to crack this one!”. This programme was limited from the start by restricting it to only four sessions, as Cracked It was closing and this was only a pilot to create a potential evidence base for this to continue going forward; it is critical that mentoring programmes going forward last longer so we can hit some of these objectives (and stability for the young mentors as well).

“I was inspired! You realise how fortunate you are (to not have a criminal record) but that doesn't mean you are more capable and therefore giving an opportunity to each one of these young individuals is the right thing and it will make our society a better place”
- Corporate Mentor

Did The Programme Work For Our Young People?

Our Objectives For The Young People Were To:

Connect

With corporate contacts.

Build Confidence

To apply for and engage with target employment.

Grow

Network and opportunities

*"Never think everyone is here to judge you, some people may be small minded but not everyone is the same, give your mentor the chance to build the relationship with you and then you will see how positive it can be."
- Young Person Mentor*

We improved the average score against all the questions that the young mentors were asked. Most notably, there were three statements which had an increase the most.

"I feel like large corporate organisations (like Deloitte) would listen to my ideas. Opinions and suggestions if I was an employee"



Such an increase in respondents' agreement with this statement is a real success of the programme. If we want to get prison leavers to reach their full potential, it is critical to foster a belief that they are able to obtain these jobs and that they would be heard in these workplaces. It is clear that Mutual Mentoring has the capacity to advance their confidence (even after four sessions).

"I know what I need to do to get the kind of work I want"



The large increase in respondents' agreement with this statement was slightly surprising; many of our young people aren't directly interested in a career at a professional services firm like Deloitte. However, the advice provided and the connections made by the corporate mentors are transferable across different sectors and areas of life. For example, one young person had introductions to people internally in Deloitte to discuss their autism initiative; another young person was introduced to the head of hospitality in Deloitte as he was interested in that area and another introduced to a mentor's connections with a gym owner as he had aspirations to open a gym himself. This additional context helps to reaffirm how business coaching from large corporate mentors can support our diverse group of young mentors still making significant progress in their career ambitions.

"I feel confident I can update my CV on my own in the future"



The large increase in respondents' agreement with this statement is really important. This statement is linked to overall confidence increased, instead of specifically linked to CV completion, based on the qualitative feedback. The young mentors were more confident in what people who might hire them are looking for after reviewing their CV with someone "who has years of experience". As is so often seen in similar programmes, a CV is a daunting document for someone who may feel as though their skills and experience aren't of value or maybe they have gaps in their CV from spending time in prison. However, having their mentors validate their skills; "my [young person] is articulate, well educated and full of potential" enhances their confidence to engage positively with their future careers.

"the relationship we built in such a small time was excellent"
- Young Person Mentor

What Did We Learn?

The learnings from this pilot have been broad and whilst many elements went as planned, there were some surprises along the way. Here are the five key takeaways.

1. Don't Underestimate Recruitment Efforts

The turnaround time for this programme was quick; from the decision to start, to the onboarding of mentors, was six weeks and therefore recruitment of young mentors was tricky. We had initially one charity partner, but as recruitment was slower than expected, we engaged a second partner, StandOut, who then recruited an additional two young mentors for the programme. Diversifying the recruitment channels to ensure you hit recruitment targets is an important learning. We ended up with a total of 11 young people mentors and 15 corporate mentors.

2. Let The Young People Drive The Corporate Engagement

We know that many of the corporate mentors were slightly reluctant at the start as they weren't sure they would have the right skills to mentor the young people and understandably apprehensive about the time commitment with a short amount of lead time. However, from the first interaction with the young mentors, the corporate mentors shared extremely positive feedback; "I was inspired by [young person's] passion". Going forward, there are considerations to bring young mentors into the corporate workspace as part of a series of events. This reiterates that engaging with the young prison leavers first-hand is what the corporate mentors really enjoy and is the most compelling way to get people involved.

"It exceeded my expectations - in fact it was one of the most inspiring experiences in the last month. My mentee is an amazing young individual doing great things already and has huge potential to impact society in a positive way." - Corporate Mentor

3. Don't Underestimate The Project Management

With 22 mentors and four organisations supporting, communication and transparency of information is key. There were more than 35 mentoring hours, masterclasses, celebration events and check-ins with the mentors; these elements do take time and are critical to the success of the programme. For a programme that was set up in such a short period of time, the reflections from the mentors and the partners were very positive about the central support; “support we got was perfect - responsive and very prompt with your help and answers”. However, this is definitely an area where we could improve as well. The main mode of communication and sharing information was via email, which can be helpful, but resulted in Deloitte mentors needing to go through emails to find various resources that they needed and a timetable of events. On the other hand, many of the young mentors did not regularly check their emails and therefore they would sometimes receive information too late to action. In future iterations of the programme, we would suggest designing this with the young mentors and corporate mentors.

It is really important to check in with both mentors on a regular basis as insights are shared and also support can be given in a timely manner. The short session reports worked really well for the corporate mentors, where they flagged key successes and challenges that we could then support on before the next mentoring session. The young mentors didn't complete the session reports, so we were concerned that we didn't have information on how they were finding the programme. Therefore, we quickly switched to informal phone calls with the young mentors as part of their general check in with their Project Manager or Coach from the charity partners. This opportunity brought value to the young mentors so they could thought-partner on anything that they may be wanting to improve, for example discussing ideas of what they may want to raise with their corporate mentor. Recommendations to others setting up a mentoring programme would be to design the best communication and resources / information channels with the large corporates, for example having an internal site with all the resources and updates about mentoring are posted so they don't need to go through emails. This could be complemented with a quick, informal communication channel for more urgent messages, e.g. slack. On the other hand, the best communication we found for the young mentors was direct messaging (e.g. whatsapp) and phone calls. Where there are multiple organisations involved, it is important to understand who has the capacity and desire to manage the support of all the young mentors during the programme.

4. Relationships Start Slowly And Grow Quickly

We started with 11 pairs, one pair didn't start and two pairs had a significant gap in mentoring. The two pairs who had significant gaps in mentoring had a few rescheduling and cancellation of sessions at the beginning. Whilst this can be common as genuinely pressing matters arise, and we have to prioritise, both young mentors and corporate mentors can experience this. Often, young prison leavers have experienced disappointment and therefore may respond more personally to changes in schedule in the early times of mentoring as these relationships are really delicate. The two young mentors who attended the event were the two who had been contacted earlier that week and really emphasised how much everyone wanted to hear their reflections. It's not that the others were not contacted, but the two that attended were the two that we managed to have a phone conversation with shortly before the event. Nurturing the relationships and encouraging the young mentors is really important and therefore sharing a calendar invite will not be sufficient to drive their engagement. However, a key lesson for everyone involved is how strong the relationships between the mentors evolved after only four sessions. A young person reflected that this was the "first success [I've] ever had".

5. Co-Design Is Key

The mentoring plan and materials for the sessions were designed with Cracked's young mentors. The Deloitte masterclasses were less well attended, with a total of three young mentors attending the two sessions that went ahead; two were cancelled and the young mentors were offered 1-2-1 sessions instead. 86% of the young mentors who didn't attend the masterclasses gave inconvenient timing as the reason. 14% responded that the topics didn't interest them. The men said they would be interested in "business and finance", "entrepreneurship" and "tax". As mentioned previously, communication and resource sharing ways of working should also be co-designed so they can be most effective from the start of the programme.



"I would have no hesitation in recommending others to be involved in this mentoring programme. I learnt a great deal about myself, the justice system and what its like to experience that. It was both interesting and also infuriating to see how difficult it can be for people to turn their lives around and not spend their entire lives being defined by past mistakes."
- Corporate Mentor

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