The Perspectives of SAYes Mentees: Mentoring for youth living in and leaving alternative care


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The Perspectives of SAYes Mentees

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Study aims

1. To explore whether formal mentoring offers an effective, scalable approach to achieving:
   - equal access to learning and opportunity
   - sustainable communities and sustainable well-being through social inclusion

2. To lay a foundation for developing a funding application for a larger-scale research with a focus on youth living in and leaving out-of-home care.
Study objectives

• Qualitative exploration of aims and perceived benefits of the SAYes TIL programme

• To determine what benefits are achieved, for which young people, under what circumstances

• To assess effectiveness in challenging intersectional disadvantage
Methods

- 2 Focus groups with mentors
- Semi-structured interviews with:
  - Mentee As (7) – haven’t had any mentors yet
  - Mentee Bs (17) – currently have a mentor, living in a children’s home
  - Mentee Cs (11) – have had mentors, have left children’s homes
- Semi-structured interviews with carers/social workers (8)
Building perspective

- Access to direction or guidance
- Viewing things differently
- Knowing myself
- Understanding the world
- Understanding what is needed to reach goals
Access to direction or guidance

“so it’s someone who doesn’t tell you what to do and doesn’t force their opinions onto you, which is different to parents who can just tell you ‘no don’t do this, do that’... unlike with a mentor, this person is guiding you, this person is asking you ‘is this the decision you want to take, and how will this benefit you and whether this is helpful to you...’”

(Mentee B4)
“before I was in the program, I thought I didn’t need money for anything, but when I joined the program and got exposed to money, I realized I need money for everything. So, it won’t be best to be asking people for money and borrowing because you will live with debts. So, I have to just get a job.”

(Mentee B3)
Knowing myself

“when you have a mentor, someone that's there for you, an adult that cares about what's happening about you and you tell them what happened and then you actually learn a lot, because when you speak about yourself and everything that happened you realise, wow, so this is how I react towards that situation. So that's how I got to learn more about myself”

(Mentee C1)
“I think being in the children's home and having been through so much in my life, I needed someone who could help me be realistic in terms of the decisions I made in my life. Even though some of them were hard but is the reality to make certain decisions and she was very honest about that.”

(Mentee C7)
“He explained to me about going to University because I want to go and study law and I need Math. Yeah, so he told me I should go for higher things and then after that something just went in me and told me that I have to study harder because low marks won't get you where you want to be”

(Mentee B8)
Building social capital: Access to social resources

“like socially I was awkward, like at events I would stand in the corner. So with my mentor, I actually like, be in engagement, so I’ve learnt how to actually speak to people and stuff like that.”

(Mentee C6)
“It’s actually easy to get what you need through them because most of them they know people who do the stuff you do. […] So it’s actually easy for them and they have other mentors that they have already met, that they do the job that you wanna do maybe and maybe they do the same thing that you wanna do.”

(Mentee B9)
“Like currently I don’t have any new mentor, but I still have four mentors, so I can always still go back and ask for guidance. Like, I was stuck in last week and I called my mentor. I was like, (mentor) I really need your guidance and, I don't know why I just went to her. She spoke me through everything.”

(Mentee C6)
Building social bonds

- Someone who is there for you
- Someone to talk to
- Respectful encouragement
- Building a trusting relationship
- Reciprocity
- Time-bounded relationship
Someone who is there for you

“like when you're feeling sad and you think that you have nobody and there comes somebody to visit you and just make you happy after that, they communicate with you they actually just take a nice walk with you, what other people don't actually do with you.”

(Mentee B7)
Someone to talk to

“Because I was going through so much this time, this semester, I think I wouldn't have made it. I probably would have gone into depression or something... So, if it wasn't for (mentor) being there and talking to me for hours and hours, I think I definitely would have gone into depression... So, her being there and just helping me and telling me maybe I should do this, that was really helpful. So, yeah.”

(Mentee B10)
“if you know where you’re going and you have the right people by your side just to encourage you and to give you enough motivation it’s good [...] he’s been there supporting me. He didn’t say ‘are you sure this is gonna work, are you sure?’ And I told him this is my idea... ”

(Mentee B5)
Building a trusting relationship

“... they are trustworthy. You can speak to them about anything and everything and you won’t be judged. Well that's a big thing for us to grow up at children's home, they'll be able to speak to somebody and believe that they won't pass this on unless you are going to cause harm upon yourself.”

(Mentee C6)
Reciprocity

“it's a 50 - 50 relationship that my mentor can’t just do all the hard work and I just sit there and do nothing, like we have to meet each other halfway. ”

(Mentee C3)
Time-bounded relationship

“You think: “ah, we had such a great bond. We shared a lot”. You know, you want to take her with into your whole life to be your mentor for life. Then you need to realise that you need to make new relationships all the time with new people to get different experiences, and, you know, try different things because everyone is different.”

(Mentee C1)
Skills and knowledge for independence

- Self-reliance

“But then she actually told me that I must start doing things for myself, that I must wait for people to do it for me, I must start helping myself. Because waiting for somebody, you can even wait for centuries... If you don't help yourself, nobody's going to be there to help, you can't depend on other people, sometimes you need to depend on yourself.”

(Mentee B12)
Informed decisions and goal setting

“I’m not gonna say I want to achieve it all at once, it is gonna go one step at a time… I will say this, that through the mentors I have actually managed to put this into steps and I know exactly how I want to do it… Because I think if I have to focus on all of them I will collapse.”

(Mentee C4)
Programme Domains

Card sorting exercise

- **Education and learning**
  - Important, 34

- **Work and money**
  - Important, 30

- **Home and family**
  - Not imp, 27

- **Identity health**
  - Not imp, 24

- **Emotional health**
  - Not imp, 20

- **Social health**
  - Important, 19
  - Not imp, 10
  - DK & 6

Programme Domains

Physical health
- Most important: Education and learning
- Least important: Sport and recreation

Community and citizenship
- Most important: Home and Family
- Least important: Physical health

Sport and recreation
- Most important: Work and Money
- Least important: Cognitive health

Cognitive health
- Most important: Home and Family
- Least important: Physical health
“Above everything else, above my pain, my past, being placed in an institution, trauma counsellors and everything, I've always had a goal in my mind that I am going to study and get a degree, and I am going to learn, and I am going to better myself. So that's one thing I told myself, that's going to be my weapon, my tool, my key to get out of the situation that I'm at, at home. That's what's going to help me to be better than my past and things that I come from.”

(Mentee C1)
Work and money

“without money, without work, there’s actually nothing that you can do because you need to survive, you need to buy food, you need a roof”

Mentee B15

“So that's how my mentor helped me, they taught me a lot about saving and having like, working with the little you have in order to sustain yourself.”

Mentee C9
“So, we actually got to speak about family and, like, family has not only been blood family related, being blood related. It’s also those people around you like the people you create and communicate with, your social network, you can also turn them into family.”

Mentee B6
Emotional health

“Whenever I feel like clocked up, or in the house I feel so stuffed up and I don't know how to feel. It's either too emotional or something then I would ask my mentor we go for a walk and one thing I’ve realized that is that it's very helpful. Because sometimes you could be so tied up in a situation and you don't realize that you could make better decisions or choices if you are a bit outside... We don’t always have to talk, it could just be a walk where you are looking at the ocean and then you’ll get back and then you now you have a fresh mind set and you feel better” (Mentee B4)
“because I'm a refugee, I've had lots of problems and challenges with regards to getting refugee status or permanent resident. So this has been important because it blocks me to education and learning work and money. So it blocks me because I can't necessarily when I am done with high school which is next year I can't necessarily go to tertiary education. I can't go and get a job because then they might be hiring an illegal immigrant.”

(Mentee B4)
“I thought I don’t need anybody because like being from a home and having through so much, you kind of realise that you have a different mind-set about life or in general. So I thought like I didn’t need social. That’s what the programme helped me to realize, based on what I want to do and how it connects to being social.”

(Mentee C9)