

Forth Valley College in Partnership with The Robertson Trust

Evaluation of Time4Me Mentoring Programme

Final Report

Kerry Swain & Julie Wrigley
Independent Research & Evaluation Consultants

August 2021

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Evaluation aims and objectives	4
2. Background Context	5
2.1 About Forth Valley College & The Robertson Trust	5
2.2 Programme Context	5
3. Evaluation Approach	11
3.1 Review of existing data.....	11
3.1 Consultation with key stakeholders	11
3.2 Online surveys	11
3.3 Depth interviews with programme participants	14
3.4 Data analysis.....	14
3.5 Limitations to the data	15
4. Key Findings.....	16
4.1 Assessing the quality and effectiveness of the current delivery model.....	16
4.2 Assessing the impact of the Time4Me Mentor Coordinator Role.....	25
4.3 Assessing the impact on participants – mentors and mentees.....	26
4.4 Assessing the impact on Forth Valley College.....	34
4.5 Assessing wider social impact	36
4.6 Suggestions for improvements and the future	38
4.7 Final reflections	40
5. Conclusions and Recommendations	41
5.1 Conclusions.....	41
5.2 Recommendations.....	43

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank everyone who helped contribute to this evaluation through sharing their views and experiences via the online survey and through interviews and group discussions.

1. Introduction

1.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

Forth Valley College (FVC) in partnership with The Robertson Trust commissioned an independent evaluation to measure the impact of Time4Me (T4M) programme over its first three years of operation (January 2018 to June 2021). A key aim was to provide vital information enabling Forth Valley College to consider the future direction of the programme and options beyond the current funding period, including the feasibility of embedding the programme into mainstream student services provision.

More specifically **key objectives** for the evaluation **by audience** were:

For the Time4Me project team – the evaluation should help inform the development of operations – recognising the programme’s strengths and areas of improvement.

For Forth Valley College – the evaluation should provide evidence to help decide the longer-term future of Time4Me and whether to invest further resources in the continuation of this project – understanding the significance, relevance and impact of Time4Me along with its potential for sustainability.

For The Robertson Trust – the evaluation (given the funding period is approaching the end) should help them to review their strategic focus – identifying the role and impact of ‘Mentoring’ as an intervention to reducing the poverty related attainment gap in education.

In summary, the **5 key areas** of interest for the evaluation were to assess:

1. the quality and effectiveness of the current delivery model
2. the impact of the Time4Me Mentor Coordinator role
3. impact of Time4Me on individual participants (Mentors and Mentees)
4. impact of Time4Me on Forth Valley College
5. the wider social impact of Time4Me.

2. Background Context

2.1 About Forth Valley College & The Robertson Trust

Forth Valley College of Further and Higher Education operates campuses across the central belt in Alloa, Falkirk and Stirling. More than 750 courses are offered to around 14,500 students per academic session. Courses range from access to degree level and include full-time and part-time courses, evening classes, flexible and online learning, vocational qualifications and business training courses. The College also one of the highest achievement rates for Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) in Scotland with over 1,450 MAs.

Founded in 1961, The Robertson Trust is the largest independent grant-making trust in Scotland. The trust funds and supports organisations working to alleviate poverty and trauma in Scotland, with funding to both universal (aimed at a wide group) and targeted (aimed at a specific group) initiatives. Areas of focus include: financial wellbeing; emotional wellbeing and relationships; and educational and work pathways. The trust has an interest in helping develop solutions for the longer term, including to:

- build a better understanding of the causes, impacts and potential solutions to poverty and trauma
- provide early help to people, aimed at preventing or reducing negative experiences and outcomes due to poverty and/or trauma
- improve the design and delivery of support services and systems for people facing poverty, trauma or both
- try out new approaches as well as doing more of what works.

2.2 Programme Context

2.2.1 About Time4Me

Time4Me is a mentoring initiative which targets young people (aged 15-26) considered at highest risk of not achieving successful and sustained educational outcomes. The groups targeted for support are:

- Care experienced young people
- Young carers/Young adult carers
- Young people from regeneration areas (SIMD20)

The Time4Me programme is fully funded by The Robertson Trust. Forth Valley College secured £143,569 from them to develop and operate Time4Me during the period January 2018 – June 2020. A further £148,505 was secured in 2020 to operate a second funding cycle enabling continuation of Time4Me until June 2022.

Time4Me mentees are Forth Valley College students enrolled on differing levels of study, the similarity being they are all in a period of transition into the further/higher education environment. Mentees are generally referred by an organisation/individual they are currently known to (e.g. young carers' organisation, local authority, social workers) who recognise the need for targeted support and who deem Time4Me to be an appropriate support intervention for that individual. Sometimes, referrals to Time4Me are made by Forth Valley College staff once the student has started term and has been identified suitable for support. Data captured by Time4Me show the retention rates for young people on the programme are high (between 90-100%) across each of the three years – which is within the programme's target (as detailed in the Logic Model, see figure 1).

Table 1 shows a breakdown of all young people referred to the Time4Me programme over the last three years, along with data showing those that resulted in a mentoring match. The data is also broken down by different demographic information. As illustrated, the numbers of young people referred to the programme have increased each year and the number resulting in an actual match have increased significantly in the latest academic year (2020/21).

Table 1 Time4Me Mentee data, year on year

Mentees		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of students referred		31	43	45
Number that progressed to a mentoring match		20	20	29
By referral pathway	Internal	7	11	12
	External	13	9	17
By age	<16	1	2	1
	16-19	17	17	18
	20-24	2	1	10
	25-29	0	0	0
By gender	Male	8	6	8
	Female	12	14	21
By cohort*	Young carer	10	9	14
	Care-experienced	13	11	14
	SIMD	11	11	13
By course level	School	5	1	0
	FE	13	17	24
	HE	2	2	4
	Other**	0	0	1
Campus	Falkirk	9	10	17
	Stirling	7	8	8
	Alloa	3	1	3
	Raploch	1	1	1

*Some are double counted as they fit more than one category

** Evening student – had been mentored in previous year as a fulltime student

Time4Me mentors are Forth Valley College staff who volunteer to participate in the programme beyond their substantive positions within the organisation. Time4Me offers all volunteer mentors training, ongoing support and supervision and networking opportunities.

Table 2 shows the numbers of mentors who were trained each year and includes the numbers of active mentors, again broken down by different demographic information. As the table demonstrates, the retention rate for mentors has remained fairly static for the last two academic years.

Table 2 Time4Me Mentor data, year on year

Mentors		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total numbers trained		32	10	8
Existing mentors - continuing to mentor		N/a	18	21
No. active mentors available		25	28	29
By staff role / type	SMT	1	0	0
	Manager	1	1	3
	Support	17	17	16
	Teaching	13	10	10
	Other	0	0	0
Gender	Male	7	6	6
	Female	25	22	23
Campus	Falkirk	11	10	11
	Alloa	2	1	1
	Stirling	11	8	8
	Flexible	8	9	9

2.2.2 About mentoring

The term mentoring has no single definition, with different interpretations and emphases when used within different sectors, geographies and over time. Mentoring is sometimes seen as overlapping with coaching, counselling, advice or befriending – among other roles. Mentoring and coaching are sometimes used interchangeably.¹

The Time4Me team at Forth Valley College is using the Scottish Mentoring Network² guidance on mentoring and the following two definitions of mentoring.

“Mentoring concerns activities that give people the tools and confidence to take control of their own pathway. It is about empowering people to plan their own future and capitalise on their own potential.”
- European Community, 1997

“While coaching and mentoring share some tools and approaches, coaching relates primarily to performance improvement, often in a specific skills area. Mentoring is primarily focused on longer-term goals and relates to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person.”
- David Clutterbuck

The training programme for Time4Me mentors highlights the following attributes of mentoring:

- Goal focused
- Supportive
- Flexible
- Person centred
- Relationship
- Non-judgmental
- Mutual
- Sharing experiences
- Needs led
- Fun
- Start – middle – end (time limited)
- One to one
- Learning together

¹ “Coaching and mentoring are development approaches based on the use of one-to-one conversations to enhance an individual’s skills, knowledge or work performance. It’s possible to draw distinctions between coaching and mentoring although in practice the two terms are often used interchangeably.” [Coaching and Mentoring | Factsheets | CIPD](#)

² [About - Scottish Mentoring Network](#)

Looking ahead, the Scottish Mentoring Network is calling on the Scottish Government to give mentoring a key role in recovery from the pandemic in domains such as education; children, young people and families; businesses and workforce; community justice and creative arts.³

2.2.3 Programme Activities

The Time4Me Mentor Coordinator oversees the Time4Me programme. This post was new to the project and recruited specifically for project delivery. The project Coordinator is responsible for all aspects of project activity including:

- Development and implementation of the project delivery mode
- Operational financial expenditure
- Recruitment, induction and ongoing support of mentees
- Recruitment, training and ongoing supervision of mentors
- Appropriate matching of mentoring relationships, and subsequent supervision of those relationships, internal monitoring, evaluation and reporting to stakeholders, partnership working

In addition to the supervision of the volunteer Mentors, the Mentor Coordinator has one direct reporting member of staff, an Administration Assistant.

As a result of learning that has taken place so far during the life of the project, the Mentor Coordinator's role has expanded beyond its original limits, in consultation with their line manager. It was discovered that:

- The mentoring relationship alone could not always address barriers to engagement with learning
- The Coordinator, with a background in student support, was well placed to identify useful next steps to help resolve any issues experienced by mentees
- Some issues were time sensitive, so it was felt appropriate for the Coordinator to intervene promptly in the best interests of the student
- If others were to have carried out these interventions it may have required:
 - Extra capacity within student support teams
 - Changes to policies, practices, staff training etc. – all of which are under consideration during the ongoing re-structure

Time4Me mentoring is a targeted one-to-one activity that takes place for a recommended 1 hour a week, during academic term times. Mentors and mentees commit to that mentoring relationship for one academic year as a minimum.

³[Mentoring in Scotland: Rebuilding Through Relationships Call to Scottish Government \(scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk\)](https://www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk)

The programme is intended to be fluid, within an overall structure, including the following stages, that take place once the match between mentor and mentee has been made:

1. One of the Time4Me team is present at the first meeting to make introductions, facilitate the start of the session and guide the pair through the 'Mentor Agreement'
2. At the first meeting, the mentor talks through a self-assessment sheet with the mentee where the mentee rates themselves on a scale of 0-4 for a list of 'soft skills' and both parties start to discuss what areas might be a priority for the mentee to explore further
3. The pair are asked to repeat this self-assessment at a mid-point and towards the end of their mentoring partnership as part of their reflection on the process and distanced travelled
4. Ongoing, weekly mentoring meetings take place, with the topics to discuss led by the mentee. A supportive activity may take place, if chosen. The mentor completes a 'Mentor Meeting Record' to log: date, time, location of meeting; focus of conversation; action points agreed; mentor reflection. These records do not contain much detail or sensitive information and are intended to serve as a record for funders, for the Coordinator to review and for mentors
5. After Easter, the pairing start to plan for a positive end to their mentoring relationship. The Coordinator facilitates the start of the End of Mentoring meeting. Thereafter, topics discussed include: reflecting on progress towards goals; future goals and support systems, such as referrals and introductions to other support services; parameters for any future contact; thanks and acknowledgements.

2.2.4 Ongoing programme monitoring and evaluation

Internal monitoring and evaluation processes are in place to assess achievement of the outcomes of the programme. Reports are produced every 6 months for the Steering Group and The Robertson Trust.

Figure 1 Time4Me Logic Model – Year 2 of Time4Me

Goal: Improve retention and success rates of those young people transitioning to college, who face additional barriers to fulfilling their potential

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES		OUTCOMES		
What we invest	What we do	Who we reach	Why this project: short-term results	Why this project: intermediate results	Why this project: long-term results
Volunteers Funding Existing FVC resources Technology Networks Marketing Dedicated staff	Facilitate mentoring relationships between students and FVC staff volunteers Deliver bespoke mentor training Evaluate effectiveness of mentor relationships and report on outcomes Facilitate a suite of personal development opportunities e.g. activity days/work placements	20+ Mentors trained 20 Mentees minimum who are: - Care Experienced - Young Carers - SIMD 20 Stakeholders: - Schools - Carers’ Organizations - Local Authorities - Youth Organizations - Skills Development Scotland - Developing the Young workforce	Identify and overcome barriers to engagement with learning Mentees will have a trusted, consistent role model who will assist them to navigate their transition to college successfully Mentors are supported in, and feel valued in their role. Their voluntary contribution is acknowledged and celebrated by FVC	Mentees – measurable improvement of - Confidence - Problem Solving - Resilience - Communication - Self-belief Project offers mentees additional development opportunities appropriate for the individual Mentees’ participation in the project is recognised and celebrated by FVC	Improved retention rates for mentees compared to non-participants from similar circumstances Mentees will progress to a full-time programme (60%) 75% success rate for Mentees on full time programmes 90% participant overall satisfaction rate 90% Mentee retention rate within project
Assumptions			External Factors		
FVC staff will be ‘willing’ to volunteer their time SMT top-down support of the project Participation in the project will be an attractive prospect to potential mentors/mentees Stakeholders will recognize the value of and engage with the project The project will add value to the student experience			National Bargaining Changes to staff terms and conditions Operational restructures New campus development represents period of change		

3. Evaluation Approach

This section details the approach used to evaluate the Time4Me programme. A mixed-method was adopted to allow both quantitative and qualitative data to be captured and to enable as many relevant people as possible to contribute and have their say.

3.1 Review of existing data

A desk-based exercise was conducted at the outset, which included a review of existing programme monitoring and evaluation data held by Forth Valley College, alongside annual reports and other relevant documents including; Logic Model. Some of this data is also presented where relevant within this report.

This review enabled an evaluation framework to be produced which shaped the questionnaires and discussion guides used during the evaluation fieldwork. All questionnaires and scripts were designed by the evaluation team and reviewed and approved by the Steering Group.

3.1 Consultation with key stakeholders

3.1.1 Group discussion with steering group members

Early in the evaluation (May 2021) a 2-hour long Zoom session was held with the 4 Steering Group members consisting of: Mentor Coordinator, Head of Equalities, Inclusion and Learning Services, Development and Fundraising Manager (all from Forth Valley College) and The Widening Access Coordinator from The Robertson Trust). This group discussion helped to provide more background and context to the programme and rationale for the evaluation, as well as informing all the elements of the project.

3.1.2 Depth Zoom interviews with other stakeholders

Two further stakeholders (an internal Forth Valley College staff member and an external referral partner) were also interviewed during May. These interviews provided contextual information, as well as valuable insight into the programme from these different perspectives.

3.2 Online surveys

A series of online questionnaires were designed to gather a range of views from those who had participated in or had contact with the Time4Me programme including:

- Mentees (current / past)
- Mentees (lapsed)⁴
- Mentors (current / past)
- Stakeholders (Forth Valley College internal staff, referral organisations, social workers etc...)

The questionnaires were designed and hosted by the evaluation team using SmartSurvey as a platform. The survey links were administered by the Mentor Coordinator via email and text messages (for the young people). Surveys went 'live' mid-June and were open for 2.5 weeks.

N.B. In some instances the questionnaires were not fully complete – but where a significant number of questions were answered, these responses have been included in the data.

⁴ 'Lapsed' is a mentee who started mentoring, but then withdrew from either the mentoring programme (and stayed at college) or they withdrew from college entirely whilst being mentored

Table 3 Online survey response rates

	No. administered	Completions	Response rate %
Mentees current / past	34	16	47%
Mentees lapsed	21	5	23%
Mentors	50	20	40%
Wider stakeholders*	-	11	Unknown
Total completions		52	

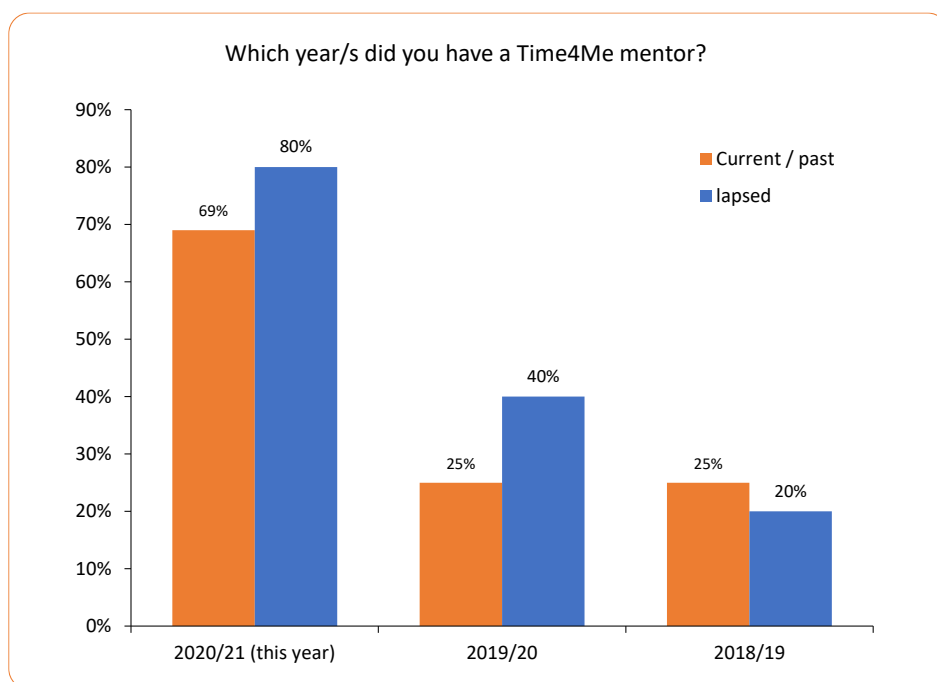
* Emails were sent to 46 stakeholders and a link published in the staff newsletter

The response rates achieved are credible for a self-completion survey.

3.2.1 Key data from online survey with Mentees

Two slightly different questionnaires were designed for mentees. One for current and past mentees and one for those who had lapsed from the programme. As illustrated in the chart below, the majority of both current / past and lapsed mentees (almost 70% and 80% respectively) had been a mentored during the academic year 2020/21.

Chart 1 Academic year (s) of being a mentee



Mentee survey 2021 – Base: Mentees (Current and past) = 16: Mentees lapsed = 5
 N.B. a small number of young people had been mentored for more than one academic year.

The table below shows what the mentee respondents were doing at the time of completing the survey - the majority of which were still studying at Forth Valley College.

Table 4 What the mentees are currently doing

	Current / past		Lapsed	
	No.	%	No.	%
Current student at FVC	11	69%	4	80%
Current student elsewhere	1	6%	0	0%
Full time carer	1	6%	0	0%
In employment	2	13%	1	20%
Other - unemployed	1	6%	0	0%

Mentee survey 2021 – Base: current / past = 16: lapsed = 5

3.2.2 Key data from online surveys with Mentors

The 20 mentor respondents worked across each of the three college campuses, but the majority were based at Falkirk Campus. Mentors' roles within Forth Valley College varied and included those in teaching positions (including lecturers), staff working in Corporate Services and those in managerial roles.

The table below shows which academic years the staff had been involved in the mentoring programme*. The majority had been involved during the academic year 2020/21, though around one half had also had involvement in each of the two previous academic years. The table also shows the numbers and percentage of respondents who were matched and were active mentors as well as those who went through the process but did not mentor.

Table 5 Mentors – years and level of involvement in Time4Me

	Current mentor 2020/21		Past mentor 2019/20		Past mentor 2018/19	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Matched and mentored	16	80%	8	40%	9	45%
Matched but didn't mentor	1	5%	1	5%	0	-
Went through the process, but not matched	1	5%	2	10%	1	5%

Mentor survey 2021 – Base = 20

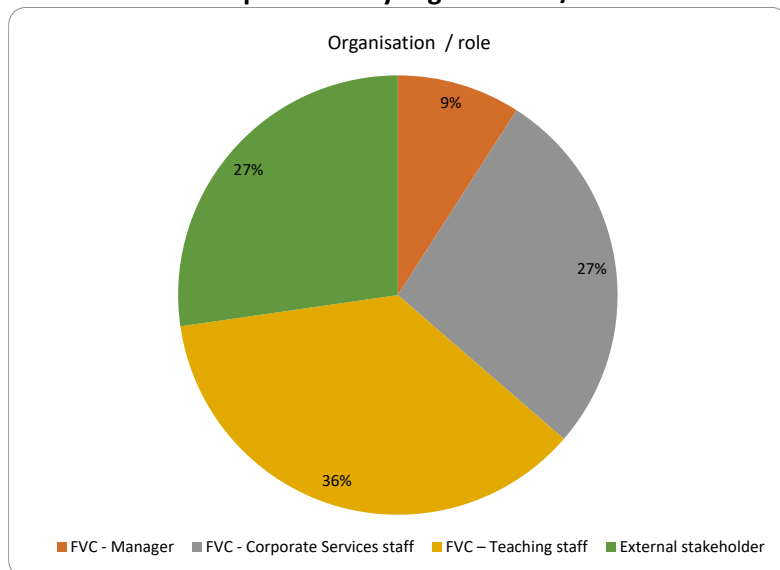
*Some respondents had mentored for more than one year

3.2.3 Key data from online surveys with Wider Stakeholders

An online link was included in a college-wide staff newsletter as well as being directly emailed to a further 46 stakeholders (mainly referral organisations, including local authorities and social workers).

The chart below shows the majority of respondents were Forth Valley College staff members – holding a range of positions. Around one in four were employed within external organisations.

Chart 2 Respondents by organisation / role



Wider stakeholder survey 2021 – Base = 11

3.3 Depth interviews with programme participants

In order to delve deeper into some of the Time4Me participants’ experiences (mentors and mentees), a series of depth interviews were conducted via Zoom and telephone. These were recruited for via the online surveys. The mentor interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes each and the mentee interviews between 20-30 minutes.

3.3.1 Depth interviews with Mentors, past and present

In total, four mentors were interviewed:

- All were female
- All were mentoring in the current academic year
- Two had also mentored during a previous academic year

3.3.2 Depth interviews with Mentees, past and present

In total three depth interviews were conducted with mentees:

- Two were males and one female
- One was a current mentee, mentored over two years; one had been mentored this year; and one had been mentored for a previous year
- Two were care experienced, one was a young carer
- Two had come to Forth Valley College from school and one had been in and out of work

3.4 Data analysis

Once all the data was collected it was analysed using a framework to aid the reporting - enabling commonalities and differences to be identified. A thematic approach was taken to the qualitative data.

All audio recordings listened to and key information recorded in a systematic manner into the analysis framework.

3.5 Limitations to the data

As is the case with many research and evaluation projects, there are limitations to the data captured. The number of participants involved in Time4Me are very small, particularly when compared against the number of students and mentors at Forth Valley College. Therefore, respondent numbers are low, which means any differences cannot be reported as statistically significant, rather they are indicative. Data within this report are often presented by both actual numbers and percentages to aid the reader and allow for transparency. Respondent base figures are also present on tables and charts.

4. Key Findings

The key findings section has been structured largely **around the 5 key areas of interest**. Where relevant, it includes data captured through different methods to provide robust data and value to the evaluation findings.

4.1 Assessing the quality and effectiveness of the current delivery model

This section focuses on all areas of the delivery of the Time4Me programme from referral through to the mentoring end point.

4.1.1 Recruitment of Time4Me participants

Awareness and promotion of Time4Me externally

According to context from the steering group, the Mentor Coordinator takes an iterative approach to the challenge of engaging with partner organisations across three local authority areas, trying out new ways of engagement, in order to improve the process over time, such as this poster.

However, there were **mixed views as to how well known the Time4Me programme was** amongst the referral organisations and agencies surveyed, as 36% said it could be improved externally.

Examples offered as to how Time4Me could be better advertised and promoted to referral agencies included:

- *Awareness raising through care reviews, children's hearings (where appropriate) and within social workers offices*
- *Promote via Skills Development Scotland's team meetings*
- *Better advertised across schools*



Perceptions of the referral process

Results from the mentor survey show that **85% of respondents believed the referral process was very effective**. In addition, those wider stakeholder survey participants who had referred young people onto the programme (both internal staff and external stakeholders) were very positive - suggesting the process was *“smooth, personalised and effective”*.

Further detail of the smooth experience for referral organisations was given during interviews. One organisation started conversing with the Mentor Coordinator in spring, allowing plenty of time to engage their young people about mentoring, before completing an application for referral before term in August. Moreover, Time4Me was very welcome for them as it filled a gap in support for young carers leaving school, during the transition into college, a time with a likelihood for some young people of drop-out.

Mentees in interviews suggested that the referral process was easy for them, whether it happened before they arrived at Forth Valley College (arranged by an organisation already working with them) or when they had started term at Forth Valley College. Mentees felt that they had a chance to understand what the mentoring was about, in advance, and to consider whether it was for them.

“Told it was to help me with my studies, with my personal development capacity.”

- Mentee

Awareness and promotion of Time4Me for prospective mentors

The Mentor Coordinator, with marketing support, advertises the opportunity to be a mentor to staff within the college. Internal stakeholders suggested there was no need for marketing to generate a response from large numbers of staff as only 20 mentors were needed each year and those numbers were achieved.

In interviews, mentors told how the **most effective way they had been recruited into the programme had been by word of mouth or personal contact**, such as:

- *Having colleagues who had already mentored*
- *Making a personal connection with the Mentor Coordinator at a training or networking event*
- *Knowledge of the mentoring programme within their team for purposes of their job role*



“Word of mouth is most effective way, to speak to their colleagues they think might have the right kind of interest or attributes.”

- Mentor

Moreover, word of mouth was perceived to reach more suitable prospective mentors than other means of marketing or communication.

Other methods of hearing about the programme had included email invitation and articles on the intranet.

Mentors felt that a **supportive attitude to the programme from the College Principal, the Senior Management Team and their own line manager facilitated them to take part as a mentor.**

An important enabler for mentors becoming involved was a synergy with needs of the mentoring role and their own personal motivations, centring around a desire to contribute:

- *To have more direct contact with students and offer something ‘valuable’ – for those not in student-facing roles*
- *To develop a greater understanding of how to support students; and at the same time to help with their own professional development*
- *To contribute to supporting the ever-increasing numbers of young people with mental health issues*
- *To offer and make use of existing skills in mentoring and / or coaching*

Awareness and promotion of Time4Me to wider staff

During the interviews, mentors noted that certain staff roles were pivotal for supporting students at risk of dropping out or experiencing a difficult transition to college. **The mentors observed that the Mentor Coordinator networked effectively** with these roles (Learning Development Workers and Curriculum Managers) to explain the mentoring programme, to advocate for mentees and to highlight the needs of these cohorts taking part in Time4Me.

“The Coordinator knows who LDWs are and would connect them up with individuals / mentees.”

- Mentor

However, among survey respondents, **there were mixed views as to how well known the Time4Me programme was across the College**. 46% of wider stakeholders said it could be better advertised / promoted internally. Examples offered included:

- *Promote via information sessions to staff and new student induction packs*
- *Produce a film to showcase the positive impact it has on mentors and mentees*

Barriers to being involved in Time4Me

Only a small proportion of both mentor and wider stakeholder survey participants said there may be some barriers - mainly for mentors but also for young people preventing participation in the programme, which in the main related to:

Barriers for mentors:

- *Not having the time to commit to mentoring*
- *Not having the support from line managers*

Mentors echoed these difficulties during the interviews, adding that **committing the time** when it was suitable for both mentor and mentee **was most difficult for those mentors with a heavy timetable of teaching** or meetings and when working across more than one campus, even with positive intentions at the outset.

"I was a classic case - put myself forward...but then actually to find an hour a week for your mentee became quite difficult...It was quite difficult to manage the diary."
- Mentor

Survey participants identified the barriers for mentees as being:

- *Stigma attached to being a mentee*
- *Some young people anxious about seeking support*

Not surprisingly, mentees who had gone on to be part of Time4Me and participated in interviews for the evaluation reported no barriers. The prospect of mentoring suited them and they became involved enthusiastically.

4.1.2 The matching process

The process

Within the survey - **94% of mentors and 90% of current / past and 80% of lapsed mentees reported the matching process as very effective**. Supporting comments provided by a couple of mentors suggested the Mentor Coordinator had worked hard to ensure the mentors and mentees were well matched, by getting to know them well at the outset - with one stating *"[the Mentor Coordinator] is unbelievably good at her job and knows the mentors and mentees so well"*.

"We had a speed dating kind of...general initial chat to see if we got on. If either of us had concerns then, or further down the line, it was clear we could re-match."
- Mentor

These positive views of the matching process were largely supported via the qualitative interviews. **Mentors appreciated the process may be challenging to execute, but believed it had been handled smoothly**. It felt to them as if the success of the match was kept under review and a match could be changed if it was no longer working.

Mentees reported having an initial chat with the Coordinator which after around two weeks’ resulted in a match being offered. There were mixed views about how easy it would be to approach the Coordinator to propose a re-match. A couple thought this could be done, but one was not confident this would be possible.

"It would be perfectly fine [...to say match was not working] ...but I was lucky enough I got matched with a mentor who was really, really good."
 - Mentee

The quality of the relationship established

Both mentee surveys asked the extent to which they agreed to particular statements relating to their mentor and the relationship they had established with them. As the table below shows the respondents were extremely positive – even those mentees who had lapsed from the programme. None of the mentees surveyed said they didn’t get on with their mentors.

Table 6 Mentee agreement with statements relating to the relationship with their mentors

Agreement with the following statements	Current / past		Lapsed	
	No.	%	No.	%
My mentor and I were able to build a positive relationship	14	88%	5	100%
My mentor became a trusted role model	15	94%	4	80%

Mentee survey 2021 – Base: current / past = 16: lapsed = 5

Mentees’ views within the interviews were consistently positive, too. **They felt well matched** with their mentor, that they could talk comfortably and **they valued their informal, easy relationship** with their mentor.

4.1.3 Training and ongoing support / supervision for mentors

Initial training

All of the mentors surveyed said the initial training was very effective.

This was supported by the qualitative interviews with mentors who highlighted the following aspects of the training they found useful:

- *Prepares you for scenarios, with strategies and tactics*
- *Exploring how to sustain a conversation*
- *Training needs analysis survey with mentors*
- *Information and support around managing boundaries*
- *Different resources to support the role*

"It would be good to have a bank of tools, various activities you could use, but not be tied to. Short and snappy things...a mentor toolkit."

One mentor suggested the training could be to be built upon with the provision of a ‘mentor toolkit’.

Supervision and support

In terms of the **on-going supervision and support** provided to mentors throughout the year – again, **100% of survey respondents believed this to be very effective**, with one mentor adding *"I think the whole process is well managed and supported by [Mentor Coordinator and administrator]. I always feel that both myself and my mentee have support if we need it and that support has been effective"*. This view was totally endorsed amongst mentors within the qualitative interviews.

CPD events / opportunities

The mentors were also asked about their views towards the CPD and networking opportunities. **In total, 85% of survey respondents said it was very effective** with the remaining 15% saying it was somewhat effective. Though one respondent said the timing of the networking events made it difficult for them to attend due to competing meetings as they were often held at the same time.

Mentor interviewees were in agreement that the CPD was effective, with sessions involving group work and a round-up session singled out for praise. Suggested improvements for consideration included:

- *The round-up session to be held mid-way through the year as well to see how people are getting on*
- *Some formal acknowledgement or accreditation from the college to recognise the CPD undertaken and its contribution towards mentors' personal development*

4.1.4 Project delivery and the mentoring journey

Expectations of the programme

Overall, 88% of current / past and 60% of lapsed mentees said **they had a clear idea of what to expect from the mentoring project**. The same proportions also said they believed having a mentor would be helpful.

Within the interviews, mentees also confirmed that they had a clear idea about the programme, believing it would provide someone to talk things through regularly and support with their studies and personal development. One young person knew what to expect from a previous experience of being mentored and all were enthusiastic about what it could do for them.

*"As soon as [named worker] described it all to me it was right up my street."
- Mentee*

*"To be honest I knew it would be good for me personally. I quite like to talk things through to process and someone to meet with every week is really useful."
- Mentee*

Positive views and experiences about the mentoring journey

In total, **94% of current / past and 80% lapsed mentees** said their **mentor meetings overall were useful**, with one adding – *"my mentor was absolutely amazing and helped me with so much!"* and another stating *"I felt supported all the way through the most difficult year by far for education, as lockdown really started wearing down on me, my mentor helped me go through all this"*.

Furthermore, 81% of mentees also said their mentor helped by signposting to other support in and outside of college.

In terms of the mentors' perspectives - **80% said the project delivery (including the one-hour weekly sessions) was very effective**, though one respondent reported *"for me, one hour a week is very difficult to keep to, and it often runs over that"*.

Mentees, during interviews, depicted a rich and detailed picture of their positive mentoring experiences. They felt that early sessions were quite formal and structured as they included forms, questionnaires and goal-setting around topics such as numeracy, communication and problem solving.

After that, for some mentoring partnerships, an amount of formality remained, including verbal or written prompts and activities to encourage the mentees to self-reflect.

All mentees also described **an evolving informality to their relationship with their mentor, which was welcomed** as this helped to reduce any feelings of anxiety and because it allowed pressing issues to be brought up and addressed.

In addition, mentors mentioned **the positive aspects of an emerging, flexible and informal way of working**, where they could reduce the formal approach (basing sessions around forms or giving explicit advice) in favour of more open-ended conversations. For example, using the interests of the mentee as the starting point and the structured activities and checklists were felt to be a useful back-up. However, an overriding focus on goal-setting was not always welcome or deemed appropriate.

"The feedback form directs you towards goals and actions - that is what you fill in on the system. I don't think there's a real big necessity for goals and actions unless the student wants it...Sometimes they might just need to chat, they may have enough going on to come up with a goal."
- Mentor

"I asked the young person about numeracy...problem solving – here on the list. They did not say very much... We did not fill in very much. What a great start!"
- Mentor

Positive mental health for mentees was also supported by signposting them to other services within college that could help – such as counselling and talking to a Health and Wellbeing Officer.

"Unfortunately, I have had quite a lot of issues with mental health... Each week we just focused on things that had come up...during the week and then figured out how to fix them."
- Mentee

"I was struggling with moods...good having someone else to talk to. Mentoring is only for an hour...goes by really quick. You can't talk to your mentor outwith that time. With [named health & wellbeing officer] I could get an appointment for an hour, once a week, to talk about whatever you want."
- Mentee

Mentors also supported with other situations. Examples were given of how they (enabled by the Time4Me team) worked with mentees so that they could interact with relevant parts of the 'system' and make fuller use of support options already provided by Forth Valley including;

- *Signposting to gain access to food vouchers for a mentee who was not always able to receive meals at home*
- *Support for a mentee to write a complaint letter on behalf of himself and another student*
- *Advocacy and accompaniment for a mentee to approach the student association with a proposal for a new support scheme to be delivered*
- *Advocacy with a Head of Department on behalf of a mentee*

"Getting them was really, really helpful. You weren't going into the holidays feeling...it made you feel a lot better getting those packages."

- Mentee

Mentees appreciated the gesture of 'care packages' given at the end of each term. They contained useful items, treats and conveyed a feeling of continuity and support over the college holidays.

What makes mentoring work?

The evaluation wanted to identify the key success factors of mentoring as a support intervention. Mentees, mentors and wider stakeholders were all asked an open question with the surveys and this was also explored further within the depth interviews with mentors and stakeholders.

A number of key concepts recurred, which highlighted **the importance of developing a trustworthy relationship, being responsive to the mentee's priorities and supporting the mentee to develop their own capacity to address challenges:**

- *Consistency, stability, regularity to build trust*
- *Being approachable, warm, friendly*
- *The one-to-one format allows for a personal relationship to develop*
- *Developing a personal connection and rapport, getting to know them over time*
- *Responding to young person's interests and priorities (the format allows this flexibility)*
- *Listening, understanding, coaching them to develop skills to work through challenges*
- *Offering support without judgement*
- *Linking them to sources of support, signposting*

Less positive experiences of mentoring

When also questioned via the survey whether they had any **less** positive experiences of mentoring – a couple of current / past mentees agreed to the statements; 'it was different to what they expected', 'it hadn't been very useful' and one said 'they didn't have enough time to give to the mentoring'.

Reasons for not continuing with mentoring

In addition, mentees that had lapsed from the programme were asked their reasons why. 60% agreed with the statement – 'they couldn't see what was the point of mentoring' and the table below highlights other reasons provided.

Table 7 Reasons lapsed mentees did not continue with Time4Me

Agreeing there are barriers to involvement in Time4Me	Lapsed mentees	
	No.	%
I could not see what was the point of the mentoring	3	60%
I left the college before the year end	1	20%
The mentoring was unhelpful for me	1	20%
Mentoring was different from what I expected	1	20%
Other – COVID	1	20%

Mentee survey 2021 – Base: lapsed = 5 (multi-response question)

A complex set of overlapping reasons can be discerned from the account, given during interview, of one regretful mentee who lapsed from the Time4Me programme and left college shortly afterwards:

- Ongoing, unresolved difficulties between the mentee and their course (and the department)
- Perceived lack of support and accommodation from the department for the mentee's study and learning needs
- Challenges that the mentee was facing in their personal life

4.1.5 Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted on everyone's way of life during 2020-21 and has **affected the way in which Time4Me could operate**. Initially the programme **moved to a remote style of delivery** (using email, text, WhatsApp, Facetime and so on...). As restrictions started easing it moved towards a more hybrid approach – allowing participants to choose how to best to engage, to suit both parties, including the option for 'walks and talks'.

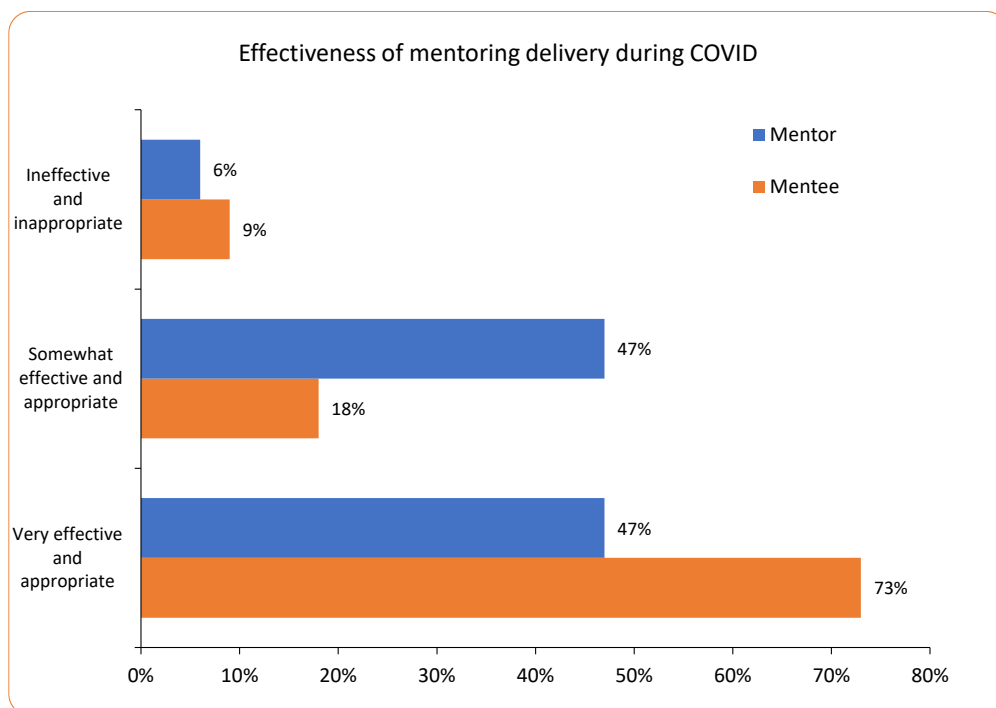
Of those that had been involved in the mentoring programme during the COVID-19 pandemic, **73% of mentees and 47% of mentors said it had been very effective and appropriate** – a similar proportion of mentors said it was somewhat effective. Though one mentee and one mentor reported it to have been ineffective or in appropriate.

In addition, one of the lapsed mentees said COVID-19 was the reason they decided not to continue being part of Time4Me, starting; *“due to covid, I felt I wouldn't get the full effect of it and could manage on my own, as much as my mentor was lovely it just wasn't my thing.”*

There were a number of additional comments provided by the mentor respondents, with some conflicted views. **Several said remote working had made it easier to maintain contact**, as it was more flexible and fit around their busy schedules better. **Whilst others said it was restrictive** and not as easy to build a relationship without face-to-face contact.

Nonetheless, several also **praised the Mentor Coordinator and Time4Me team** for their **continued efforts to ensure the programme continued and adapted** to ever-changing COVID-19 restrictions *“Even when faced with extraordinary challenges this year the project and its implementation has been incredibly adaptive and supportive for both mentors and mentees from my experience. In no small part I credit this to the staff involved in delivering.”*

Chart 3 Effectiveness in Time4Me delivery during COVID-19



Mentor survey 2021 – Base: 17 & Mentee survey 2021 – Base = 11 (respondents involved in T4M during the pandemic period)

Praise for the proactive approach of the Time4Me team during remote working was emphasised during interviews with mentors.

However, interviewees also described mixed consequences of the necessary adaptations that had taken place to the Time4Me service.

Some pairings had managed to make the new situation work, with positive engagement from both parties. Some mentors had found it an advantage that, working from home, they could respond more promptly to their mentee than usual when working on campus.

"[Co-ordinator] has been really good during COVID, checking in and making sure you are ok...also organised mindfulness sessions and these worked really well for my mentee."
- Mentor

There were clear **difficulties for some mentees and mentors**, particularly when mentees **had a lack of private space at home**, nowhere else to go and were reluctant to call by phone. In these cases, texting / messaging was what remained. In one case, the ending to the mentor-mentee relationship also had to take place via messaging. In addition, mentors noted the blurring of boundaries they experienced when on a video call with a mentee in their bedroom, in their pyjamas and / or with family members wandering around.

4.2 Assessing the impact of the Time4Me Mentor Coordinator Role

The **Mentor Coordinator role and support staff were seen as extremely valuable** by both Time4Me participants and wider stakeholders - and some views have already been highlighted in the previous section.

Within the mentor survey, respondents were asked how effective the **Mentor Coordinator role** was. **All said it was very effective.** Several added positive supporting comments including one who stated *“The team who run Time4Me are fantastic! [Mentor Coordinator] is unbelievably good at her job and knows the mentors and mentees so well”*.

The depth interviews explored the role in more detail from the perspective of participants and others. For mentees, the initial meeting with the Coordinator provides an important first impression of the Time4Me programme, setting its tone and expectations, while also helping to enthuse mentees about taking part. The Coordinator is also felt by mentees to be available as back-up, or to be there to help sort out issues that cannot be addressed within the mentoring sessions alone.

For mentors, **the role is indispensable to the programme**, providing a connecting and communicating function which is executed successfully:

- *A great communicator and always responds*
- *A lot of work in the background...pulls it all together*
- *Inspires confidence*
- *A steady pair of hands*
- *Very capable project manager*

A similar view was held from outside the college. **External referral partners could also see that this role was pivotal**, with regular two-way dialogue taking place for the benefit of the young person as they navigated their transition into college.

“I think [the role] is massive, just to have that person in the core who is able to connect with everybody.”
- Referral Partner Organisation

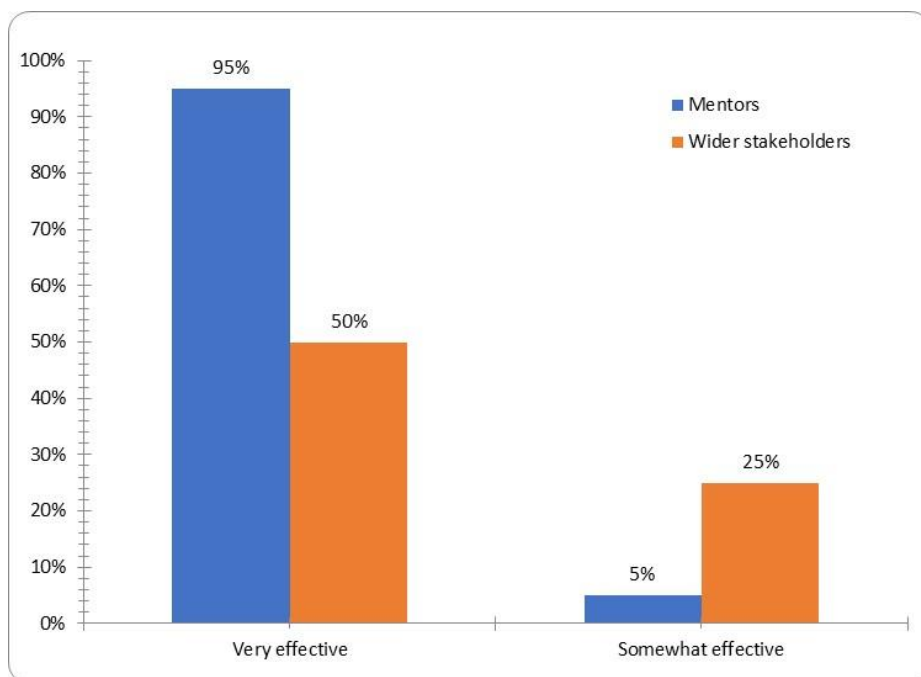
4.3 Assessing the impact on participants – mentors and mentees

This next section of the report focusses on the impact the Time4Me programme has had or is likely to have on participants involved, from a range of perspectives.

4.3.1 Views towards the effectiveness of Time4Me in improving mentees lives generally

There was a strong view from mentors and wider stakeholders who responded to the survey, that **the Time4Me programme is effective in improving young people’s lives** as the chart below shows.

Chart 4 Effectiveness of Time4Me in making a positive impact on the lives of young people



Mentor survey 2021 – Base: 20 & Wider stakeholder survey 2021 – Base = 11

Additional views provided via the mentor interviews further confirm the **positive contribution made by mentors providing ‘cheerleading’, support, kindness, consistency** and sometimes a corporate parenting role to students on the programme.

"I have never met somebody who is so genuinely moved when someone does something kind...that someone cares. My mentee has never had that... anything consistent...they know this [project] is every week and it's for me."

- Mentor

"I did all these things with my children. It is that corporate parent role. They don't have someone that can give that advice and guidance. I thought of it like a college mum."

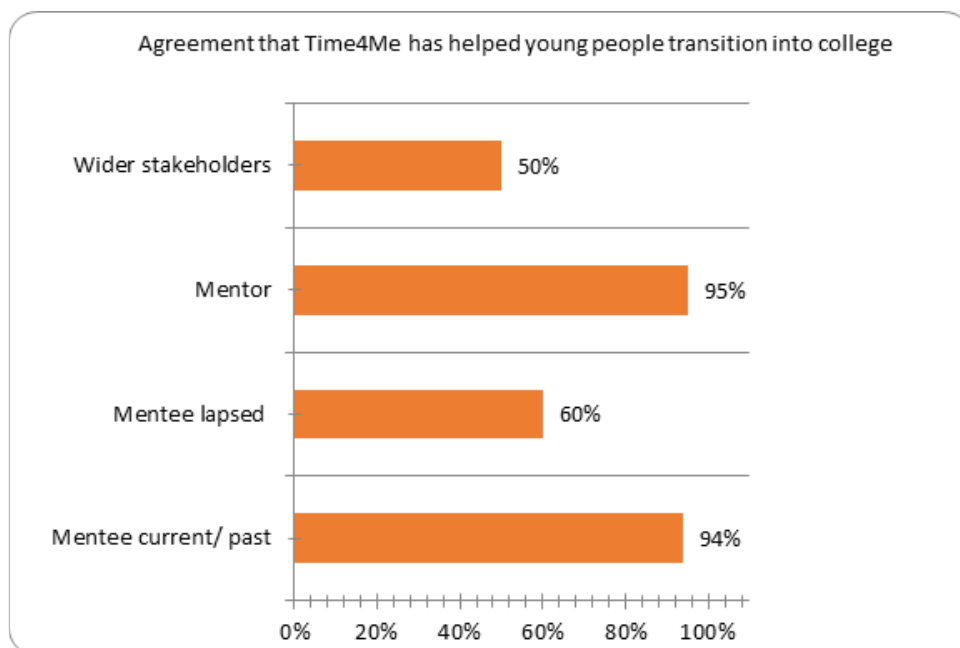
- Mentor

4.3.2 Impact on mentees - Transition, enjoyment of college and continuation to study

A key aim of the Time4Me programme is to help young people transition into college.

In total, 94% of current / past and 60% of lapsed mentees felt supported by their mentor to settle into college. 95% of mentors and 50% of the wider stakeholders surveyed also believed Time4Me has / would help mentees with this transition phase.

Chart 5 Whether Time4Me has helped young people transition in Forth Valley College



Mentee survey 2021 – Base: current / past = 16: lapsed = 5 Mentor survey – Base = 19 (1 no response) & Wider stakeholder survey Base = 8 (3 no responses)

Mentees were able to explain more, in interviews, about **how daunting it was for them to face starting at college**, with patchy recent experience of education. Some had achieved no qualifications at school, had additional needs, or been asked to leave school or out of education for a while. Lots of aspects of navigating the college experience caused anxiety. Having **a mentor to talk to, listen to them and advocate for them (e.g., to change courses) was valued** at this tricky time.

“Getting used to a new routine. Not knowing anybody. College is a completely different environment from school. At school you have guidance teachers, people you can go speak to. At college you are standing on your own feet. You don’t know who to go to about certain things. I found that difficult.”
- Mentee

The wider stakeholder and mentor survey respondents were asked whether they believed Time4Me has or would help young people enjoy and stay studying at Forth Valley College. As the table illustrates, many were very confident it had a positive influence. One mentor also added *“without Time4Me they would have just dropped out and cut all contact with the college and made any return very unlikely”*.

Table 8 **How Time4Me helps mentees.**

Agreement that Time4 Me helps mentees....	Mentors		Wider stakeholders	
	No.	%	No.	%
Enjoy and embrace college life	17	84%	6	75%
Continue to study at FVC	19	100%	6	75%

Mentor survey 2021 – Base = 19 (1 no response) & Wider stakeholder survey Base = 8 (3 no responses)

This view was fleshed out in a mentor interview, with examples given of how **the mentor was able to work with the young person to allay their anxiety** by working through strategies to help them navigate the physical and social environment of college – a task particularly difficult for the student due to additional support needs.

"When I first met my mentee, they were very shy, unwilling to speak. They were nervous about finding their way round college. They were worried about what they would talk about with other students.

We had a walk around the (massive) campus. We found where everything was...their class...so when they came in for the first day they did not have to worry. That was the first thing...

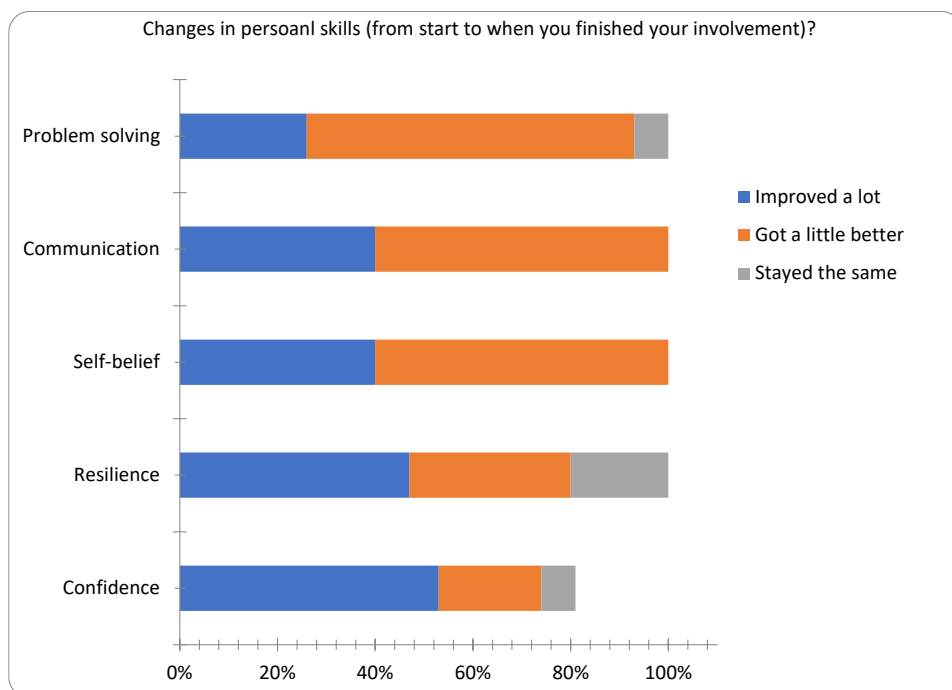
Then [how to have a conversation...] we talked about things they may be able to talk about. So, not to be in that position of not knowing what to say."

- Mentor

4.3.3 Impact on mentees - intermediate outcomes: skills developed as a result of being involved in Time4Me

Overall, 94% of mentees surveyed said **having a mentor helped improve their personal skills**. When asked more specially about the skills they had developed - as the chart illustrates, a whole range of skills had improved – with confidence improving the most.

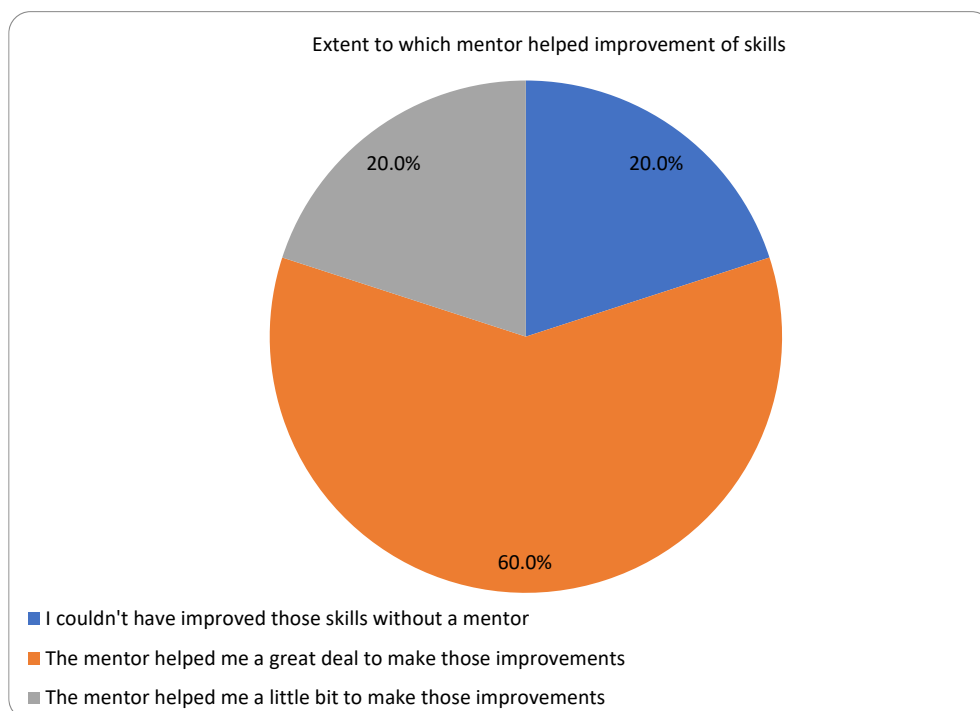
Chart 6 **Extent to which softer-skills had improved since involvement in Time4ME**



Mentee survey 2021 – Base: current / past = 15 (1 no response)

The survey also asked mentees whether they felt their mentor had contributed to helping them develop their personal skills. **In total, 60% said ‘they couldn’t have improved without their mentor’** and a further 20% stated their ‘mentor had helped a great deal’ (the remainder felt their mentors had helped a little).

Chart 7 **Extent to which mentor helped with skills**



Mentee survey 2021 – Base: current / past = 15 (1 no response)

Views provided by mentees during interviews suggested that they had improved some of these skills but that not all of these skills were necessarily a priority for them. Mentees did not always name the skills explicitly, but demonstrated improvements by giving examples of situations they had learnt how to tackle differently.

- *Growing levels of confidence in producing work that was ok to hand in*
- *Improvements in problem solving strategies and communications skills, with an accompanying reduction in anxiety*
- *Growing confidence and assertive communication when approaching professionals within college (the Student Association about autism awareness, lecturers) and beyond (CAMHS, social workers)*
- *A successful problem-solving approach and action plan to address friction in one particular class with one lecturer*

"[Mentor] helped me with my confidence. I wasn't confident with work I was handing in, so they would check it and give guidance I needed...Over weeks I got more confident about handing work in."

- Mentee

"It has helped me in terms of dealing with college and speaking with different departments, as I would have anxiety sometimes, so I would say it has helped with communication skills."

- Mentee

"When something was going wrong at college, I wouldn't be able to stick up for myself, put my views across, stand my own ground. I would shy away from it. From having the mentoring...I was able to stand up for myself, say what was going wrong."

- Mentee

"Together we came up with a plan. For that class, I would sit alone, not distracted by other people. [I had] this little board, to follow 3 targets - respect other people, no swearing, something else. I would get a star for each one...If I got so many stars, I would get a reward at end of the week (certificate, prize under £20). It worked really, really well...Me and my mentor came up with amazing ideas!"

- Mentee

Mentors were asked similar questions to the mentees about their skills development. **80% of mentors agreed their mentees had improved across all of these skills** and in particular in terms of their confidence and communication skills. Additional comments were also provided in support of this data including: *"Mentees grow, develop and become more confident in themselves and as learners"* and *"My mentee has grown in confidence... they have improved on their communication skills... they have improved on resilience by developing strategies dealing with stress during study and increased independence"*.

Through the interviews mentors were also able to give examples of which skills mentees had improved, through the process of receiving mentoring, and in which types of situations:

- *More confidence and proactive decision-making about courses or study or finding a job*
- *More assertiveness in asking lecturers for help*
- *More assertiveness in knowing when to say no*
- *Resilience and an ability to come up with strategies when a crisis occurs*

4.3.4 Impact on mentees - longer-term outcomes: increased retention and success rates at Forth Valley College

The following tables show some of the outcome data gathered by the Time4Me Mentor Coordinator in terms of participants’ retention rates and success rates (those achieving qualifications) year on year. The tables also compare the data against other students from similar cohorts / backgrounds not participating in the programme. Although the percentages for those on the Time4Me programme appear to be lower when compared against those from similar cohorts. Given the small numbers of participants on the programme compared to the students in these cohorts overall – care should be taken when reading these results. It is also important to highlight two key points;

- Young people are referred to Time4Me because they are identified as having more significant challenges
- Success for some of these young people may not always be borne out in this data (as the report findings demonstrate). For example, **some young people through their involvement in Time4Me have gained confidence to make informed choices**, resulting in them leaving Forth Valley College, but with a positive outcome.

"T4M acknowledges that you may not finish your course and that may still be a positive...but the way the college measures success is around retention and achievement numbers...but they are not the only important things"
 - Steering Group Member

N.B. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, colleges assessed and reported **2019/20** outcomes using a slightly different framework than in previous years, which took into account the exceptional circumstances faced. The same framework will be used for **2020/21** although reporting on this has not started yet. <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/guidance/2020/SFCGD072020.aspx>

Table 9 Student retention rates – T4M participants & other students from similar cohorts

Student Retention Rates (%)	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Retention at FVC - T4M participants	80%	90%	66%*
Retention at FVC - non T4M participants**	88%	95%	Not avail***

*Figures are predictions made by the Mentor Coordinator based on knowledge of the student circumstances. These may be subject to change based on the manner of reporting outcomes given the exceptional circumstances.

**similar cohorts/ backgrounds (combined) <24 years

***This information is not finalised until late 2021 once all results are processed and verified by college SMT.

Table 10 Student achievement rates – T4M participants & other students from similar cohorts

Student Success Rate (SR) - achieving qualifications %	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
SR - students on f/t course, T4M participants	70%	70%	59%*
SR - students on f/t course, non -T4M participants	69%	72%	Not avail***

Mentors were asked in the survey whether Time4Me helped with their mentees longer-term outcomes at Forth Valley College. All mentors believed the Time4me had contributed to longer-term outcomes.

Mentor interviewees shared their perceptions that **mentoring had made a positive longer-term impact on mentees**: for some fully and for some in a more qualified way. In some instances, the mentoring pairing had enabled a mentee to stay on at college, in spite of ‘chaotic’ challenges in other aspects of life.

"My mentee ended their time at college in a much more confident and positive way...Instead of engaging with the system [on its terms] they had someone on their side to talk it through and maybe find another way...Without Time4Me they would have just dropped out and cut all contact with the college and made any return very unlikely."

- Mentor

Some mentees had been enabled to stay at college for longer than they might have done otherwise without mentoring and to improve their soft skills along the way, even though they had now left. This boded well for the future, as these mentees retained the benefits of these improved skills and the positive relationships they had enjoyed with their mentor. It was therefore, likely that they retained a more positive view of returning to education (at Forth Valley College or elsewhere) than would have been the case otherwise.

Similarly, **mentee interviewees discussed mixed longer-term outcomes relating to staying on at college.** Even when mentees had enjoyed a positive mentoring experience, it was no guarantee of retention. Examples were provided of mentees leaving Forth Valley College following unresolvable difficulties with a particular course or the college more generally.

Nevertheless, as the mentors had believed, the mentees retained a positive attitude to re-entering education and had secured places at new colleges and on new courses for the upcoming year.

4.3.5 Impact of Time4Me on mentors

Although the main aims of Time4Me relate to the young people it supports. This evaluation also aimed to explore the extent to which the programme has an impact on the mentors involved.

Mentor's professional and personal development

The survey asked mentors whether being involved for **Time4Me had supported their professional development.** For those who were able to respond, all said they had - to a degree, as 63% fully agreed to this statement and the rest partially agreed. One respondent added *"you have a chance to learn new skills... it helps you to listen and really understand what the issues are in terms of challenges and not just jump to conclusions/answers"*.

Experiences of professional development were confirmed via interviews with mentors. They said they had **learnt new skills that benefited them in their current roles.** An example of this was a mentor now having a better ability to draw boundaries, relying on joint problem solving in place of stepping in to 'fix' a situation for a student.

In addition, one mentor described how, in a new role, they had now set up a mentoring programme, shaped by their own experience of Time4Me.

The survey went on to ask mentors whether **they had also 'developed personally from their involvement' in Time4Me** - 80% fully agreed with this statement and the remaining partially agreed. There were several supporting comments provided suggesting the programme was a rewarding experience enabling them to impact positively on the lives of young people they support. *"This has probably been one of the most rewarding things that I have ever undertaken in my personal and professional life"* and *"it is an excellent idea and really make a difference to the young people it supports"*.

As mentioned above, mentors were frequently motivated to join Time4Me to contribute their skills and support to students in need of it. Within the interviews, **there was widespread agreement that the experience had been personally rewarding** and had met expectations to have a positive influence on a young person's life.

"I have been able to have a different level of engagement than I would with other students. We're connecting on a different level. Am able to be more personable, find out what's working for them, what isn't."

- Mentor

"[Biggest success was] ... feeling of having made a difference and having helped someone to realise their potential - without having to fix it."

- Mentor

Recognition from Forth Valley College

All survey respondents fully agreed they felt 'valued in their role as a mentor'. However, when asked whether they felt 'their voluntary contribution was acknowledged and celebrated by Forth Valley College' – a lower proportion – 57% fully agreed with the remainder partially agreeing. One respondent explained *"College management have not fully recognised the time impact of mentoring on teaching staff and their timetable commitments, however recognition and celebration was very forthcoming from the project team themselves. There is still room for improvement on this element at an institutional level"*.

4.4 Assessing the impact on Forth Valley College

Discussions with the Steering Group provided a college-wide context for the Time4Me programme, which was supplemented by views provided by mentors and wider stakeholders in interview.

4.4.1 Contributing to the college strategic plan

Time4Me contributes towards several of the outcomes that make up the college strategic plan 2017/22, including:

- Creative learning strategy – creating a vibrant learning organisation and delivering a ‘whole system’ approach
- People strategy

Time4Me also targets Scottish government priority groups from the Scottish Funding Council’s Outcome Agreement Guidance, including: care experienced, student carers and SIMD10.



4.4.2 Becoming a showcase project

The Time4Me project can be used as **an exemplar case study to showcase to potential funders and partners:**

- The college’s expertise in implementing innovative ways to support more vulnerable students
- The college’s collaborative, iterative and fruitful approach to working with funders and partners

4.4.3 Developing networks

The college has developed its contacts and partnerships with organisations across three local authority areas – Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannanshire. College staff have forged links with the Scottish Mentoring Network and other members of that network.

4.4.4 Learning about mentoring

The college has benefited from the experience and learning of The Robertson Trust, particularly about mentoring. The Mentor Coordinator has learnt about mentoring by attending training and events from the Scottish Mentoring Network. This includes ‘train the trainer’ courses to build capacity and knowledge about mentoring amongst wider college staff.

As the Time4Me project has taken an iterative approach, encouraged by The Robertson Trust, the college has already benefited from the experience and learning gained in the early stages of the programme.

4.4.5 Highlighting areas for investigation, relating to widening participation

Stakeholders involved with the project have identified **areas for further exploration relating to widening participation**, including:

- College-wide awareness raising of the needs of students who are care experienced, carers or in poverty in order for the whole environment to become inclusive; building on the progress made for those with additional needs
- Mapping student carer needs

- Understanding that defining 'success' for these cohorts may be more nuanced than simply measuring easily quantifiable indicators (such as retention and achievement)

4.4.6 Complementing other support initiatives

Forth Valley College offers a range of support services, such as Learning Support, Mental Health Counselling, Support and Guidance, Communications Support.

Time4Me complements these services as mentees can access these other support services too, as appropriate. Time4Me is more intensive than most other services, as it is offered one-to-one and with a duration of one college year and is more holistic, offering support around the whole person, rather than specific needs.

4.4.7 Volunteers donating their time

Mentors have provided their own time to learn new skills and to support students of the college. In some cases, this has continued beyond the original planned year and when the mentee-mentor relationship has officially ended

4.4.8 Staff skill development

Individual **staff have developed their skills**. The Mentor Coordinator has learnt new skills around mentoring and project management as part of their role expansion over time.

Mentors have received training and learnt through their experience how to offer holistic support to students with multiple challenges.

A Corporate Parenting training programme is in development.

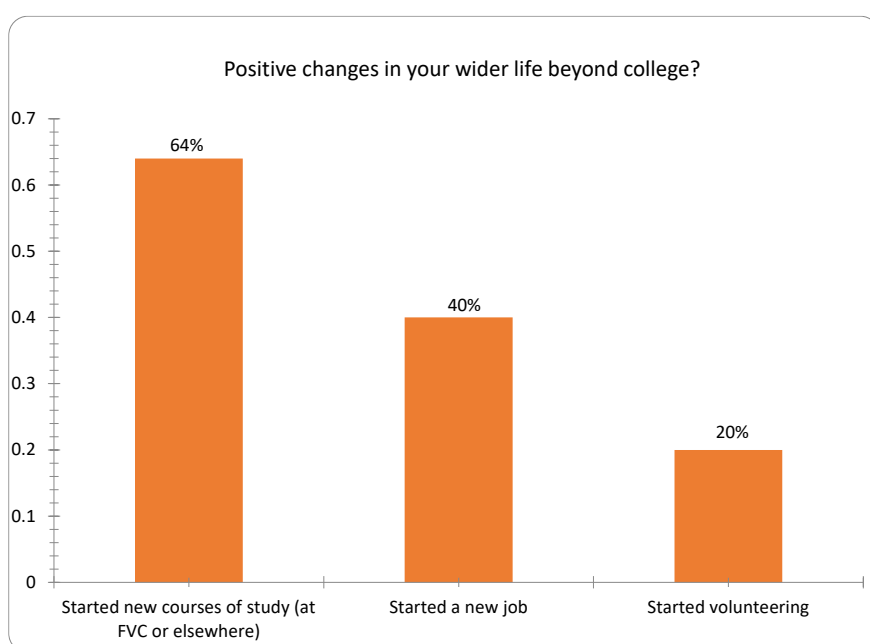
4.5 Assessing wider social impact

Forth Valley College and The Robertson Trust were interested in exploring the wider social impact of Time4Me. It appeared the programme had **contributed to the social good**, however, it is important to note it is not possible to attribute these benefits to the programme alone, as there may be a number of influencing factors.

4.5.1 Further study, employment and volunteering

The mentees were asked within the survey whether during or after their involvement in Time4Me **they made positive changes to their lives outside of college** in relation to further study, employment and volunteering opportunities. The chart below illustrates their responses. One mentee added *“Thanks to my mentor I have been able to stand up for myself and voice my feelings to professionals I work with”*.

Chart 8 Positive changes to mentees lives



Mentee survey 2021 – Base: current / past = 15 (1 no response)

Through the interviews, mentees added extra detail about the types of support the mentors had offered in these areas:

- *New volunteer opportunities had been shared with one mentee, already an avid volunteer on behalf of care-experienced young people*
- *Help to produce a CV for a part-time job*
- *Coaching to help the mentee research a prospective employer and to take part in a mock interview as preparation for the real thing*
- *Discussing unresolved work issues*

4.5.2 Improved relationships

The survey asked mentees whether they felt any of their relationships had improved. **80% reported improved relationships with friends and peers** and 73% said they had improved relationships with family members.

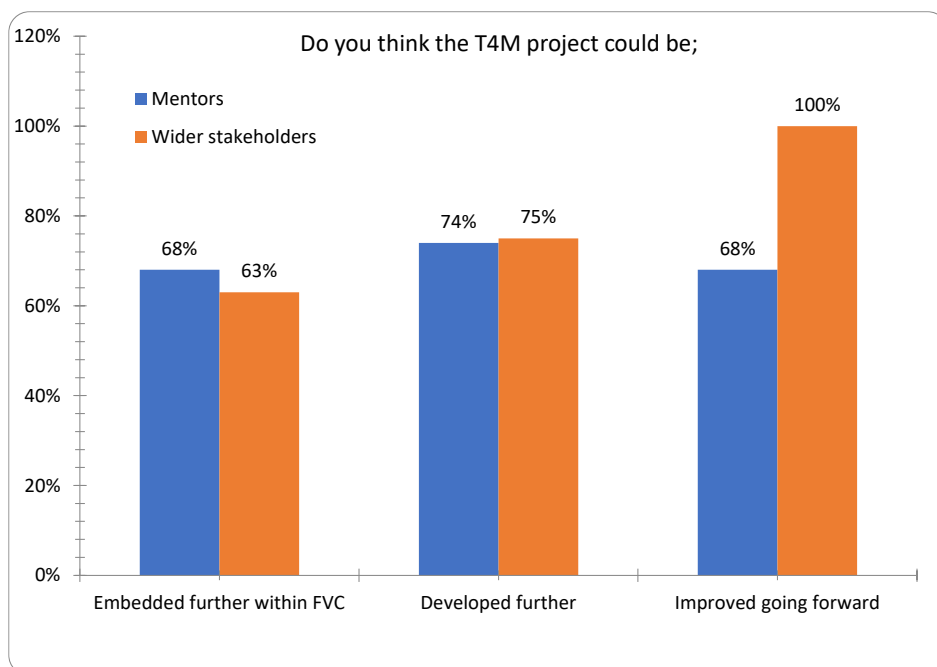
4.5.3 New groups hobbies

Some of the young people involved in Time4Me also developed in other ways through their involvement in the programme. **94% of mentees agreed they felt supported by their mentor to flourish** in their life outside of college and 73% said they'd taken up new activities or had joined new groups.

4.6 Suggestions for improvements and the future

The surveys asked mentors and wider stakeholders whether the Time4Me project could be embedded, developed or improved going forward. As illustrated below a large percentage of both groups felt it could be.

Chart 9 **Extent to which mentors/ stakeholders felt T4M could be embedded, developed & improved**



Mentor survey 2021 – Base = 19 (1 no response) & Wider stakeholder survey - Base = 8 (3 no responses)

Suggestions for how the programme could be developed and improved were provided (some of which have been reported on in previous sections). However, other views included:

- *Provide the opportunity to a wider range of young people*
- *Extended to be provided outside of academic term time*
- *Allow more opportunities for mentees to come together for activities that will support them*
- *If funding is discontinued, the college should look to take this project onboard*

Additional views about how the programme could be further developed, improved or embedded were provided through the depth interviews with mentors, mentees and wider stakeholders.

4.6.1 Recruitment of mentees

Some mentors suggested building on a trend that was already happening – that of referring mentees to the Time4Me programme from within the college. It was expected this would come from key ‘gatekeepers’ in a position to identify those who could benefit, such as Learning Development Workers, Curriculum Managers, Lecturers and others within the support service.

There was **widespread support** (from mentors, mentees, referral partners and stakeholders) **for widening the reach of the programme** to other cohorts so that more young people could benefit.

Suggested beneficiaries included:

- *Those facing mental health challenges, particularly after COVID*
- *Other vulnerable students*
- *Students at risk of non-completion*
- *Students without support outside college*
- *Single women returners*

"I think this scheme should be open to everyone. It is putting labels on us (care experienced) like we always need extra support and we don't always. Instead of labelling it for care experienced young people and young carers how about it is for everyone at college...more than welcome?"

- Mentee

4.6.2 Recruitment and use of mentors

Widening the reach of the programme would require additional mentors.

Mentors used their own experiences to offer ideas for how this could be approached.

- *Keep the voluntary element to participate, but include the weekly one-hour of mentoring as paid college time, not taken out of mentors' own time*
- *Acknowledge the mentoring training and experience as counting towards CPD accreditation*
- *Consider introducing peer mentors, perhaps in a supportive 3-way relationship*
- *Maximise use of the pool of mentors with a shorter programme duration, such as six months in the first instance or for some mentees; this could also reduce the risk of dependency*

"The second half of the year there were a lot of cancellations, not attending...My one didn't want to let go because she wanted the crutch there...They want to keep that person that they can go to."

- Mentor

4.6.3 Contribution and co-design from mentees

Mentees were interested to add their own suggestions for the programme, desiring a greater involvement in its overall design or in details of its operation:

- *Involve young people with lived experience in overall planning*
- *Consult students about what mental health support is needed*
- *Give mentees more choice at the matching stage, using an example from another programme where mentees were provided with a catalogue of mentors to choose from*
- *Let mentees and mentors decide amongst themselves if a meeting time is to be changed*
- *Allow mentoring meetings to take place off campus*

"It should be about the students at the college, not what the college thinks is best."

- Mentee

"It would be really nice if mentors and mentees could meet out with the college in a less formal place. The college can be busy, are only so many rooms you can sit in to be private, confidential. So, even just to break it up a bit, go a walk somewhere, as simple as that."

- Mentee

4.6.4 The role of mentoring within the wider college support ecosystem

Mentors and stakeholders considered how mentoring could fit within the wider-college support ecosystem. That ecosystem was not limited to roles designated as support roles, but was believed to fall to the whole college.

4.7 Final reflections

The survey respondents and interviewees were asked if they had any additional comments to add about the Time4Me programme.

*"...hand on heart my mentee would not be here if she didn't have that weekly support from this project."
- Mentor*

The vast majority echoed much of what they had already said - providing **complimentary comments about the programme** and highlighting the positive impact it has had – with several also hopeful that it would continue to operate in the future. *"Important service that should be further supported for the benefit of mentees and mentors".*

Furthermore, mentees, were asked to say one word or phrase which summed up their experience of Time4Me, which is illustrated via this wordle.



5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Overall Time4Me has offered a strong contribution to facilitating a successful transition into college for a number of young people involved in the programme, while enabling those students to develop their softer skills which has often helped contribute to other positive outcomes.

5.1.1 The quality and effectiveness of the current delivery model

There appeared to be **adequate awareness of Time4Me** amongst internal staff members, particularly those working in support services. It was evident the Mentor Coordinator worked hard to promote the programme externally by building relationships with prospective referral agencies. However, external agencies felt that the programme could be even more widely promoted.

Word of mouth was seen as being the most **effective way of recruiting mentors to the programme**. Mentors felt that visible support for the programme from the college's senior staff and line managers enabled them to volunteer and fulfil their mentoring roles. **Time constraints** were the most likely cited barriers to being a mentor.

The **referral process was deemed effective** – with most participants (mentors and mentees) being clear about what they were signing up to.

In the majority of cases the **matching process** had been successful. The Mentor Coordinator was praised for their efforts to ensure suitable pairings by **taking time to build relationships** and getting to know the participants.

The **training and CPD** opportunities were both **welcomed and valued** by mentors.

The **structure** for the mentoring sessions (particularly early on in the partnership) **was seen as useful**. Within some partnerships a less formal approach was taken to the weekly sessions, which the mentors and mentees appreciated as it worked for them both; whilst others stuck more closely to the 'goal setting' activities. In several depth interviews it was stated that the partnerships had continued beyond the year and again this was seen as beneficial to both parties. There were very few negative experiences cited by participants of the programme.

COVID-19 forced adaptations to the delivery of the programme. The **efforts made by the Mentor Coordinator** to ensure the **continuation of the programme were appreciated** by all. However, not being able to have face to face contact for some mentees was problematic.

5.1.2 The impact of the Time4Me Mentor Coordinator role

There was an overwhelming sense that the Time4Me project wouldn't operate or be as effective without the Mentor Coordinator role and support staff managing and driving the programme. But it was also evident that the **personal attributes held by the current Coordinator** massively contributed to the **success of the programme**. In a sense, the role acted as the 'glue' between the parties involved in the programme and the rest of the college.

5.1.3 The impact of Time4Me on individual participants (Mentors and Mentees)

The programme had a positive impact on both mentors and mentees – with many of the short, intermediate and long-term outcomes (as defined in the Logic Model) being met.

Mentors valued the opportunity to develop a respecting and trusting personal relationship to make a **meaningful difference to an individual student's life**. Whilst for the mentees, a huge positive aspect was having **someone to understand them and be alongside them to develop strategies** to successfully navigate their transition to and continuation at college.

Over time, the young people had a **marked improvement in a number of softer skills** – particularly in terms of confidence, problem solving and communication skills, which many attributed to the input of their mentors.

The longer-term outcomes for the majority of young people related to **continuation within education**, whether in an original course, a shift in course at Forth Valley College, or a move to a new college. This was coupled with **successful completion of their course** for the majority of participants.

Several mentors felt they had **professionally benefited** from their involvement in the programme, with many citing new skills which they had been able to transfer into existing or new roles.

5.1.4 The impact of Time4Me on Forth Valley College

The programme has contributed to a number of the **strands within Forth Valley College's strategic plan**.

It was evident that some **useful connections** had been developed within the three local authority areas and also nationally with the Scottish Mentoring Network, all of which pose new opportunities for the college.

There had been new learning for both the college and programme staff members, which could help with the **embedding and sustainability of the programme and its mentoring approach**, should the external funding cease.

5.1.5 The wider social impact of Time4Me

The programme also appeared to **impact on some young people more widely** by facilitating their participation in volunteering, paid work and continuation of further education.

5.2 Recommendations

From this evaluation there are a number of key recommendations which Forth Valley College may wish to consider:

1. Enabling mentors more flexibility to give their time to the programme, whilst still meeting their mentees' needs: the partnerships could be permitted to decide on the regularity and the timing when mentoring meetings take place.
2. Providing different options for involvement in the programme, such as: introducing a more focussed, intervention (of a shorter duration, such as 6 months); and continuing with the option of hybrid delivery, which has proved an asset for some participants.
3. Maintaining the role or functions undertaken by the Mentor Coordinator to ensure the continued smooth running of Time4Me or its successor programmes.
4. Exploring mentoring or similar interventions for a wider group of vulnerable student cohorts, such as those with 'mental health needs', 'parent returners', 'estranged students' and others 'at risk' of non-completion of college courses. The exact delivery model and intended outcomes may wish to be considered in detail with respect to their suitability for each of these student cohorts.
5. Working more closely with Curriculum Managers to increase their understanding of the Time4Me programme and how they can better work alongside the programme to support mentees to transition successfully into college.
6. Increasing recognition of the voluntary contribution made by mentors by celebrating or endorsing the new skills developed via their mentoring role. To build on this, the professional development of mentors could be fostered and tracked over the longer term.
7. Developing additional ways to capture and measure success, with less emphasis on student retention and attainment rates as measured by Forth Valley College and more evidence gathered relating to participants' experiences and wider positive outcomes.
8. Showcasing and promoting the successes and benefits of the programme (for example, illustrated via case studies) both internally - to staff or relevant students and externally – to referral partners, local organisations and prospective funders.
9. Inviting contributions from mentees to co-design evolving aspects of the programme and explore the possibility to take on a role as 'peer-mentors'.
10. Designing pathways through the college 'support eco-system' to offer mentoring in the most appropriate ways to support the successful transition of vulnerable students into the college environment, whilst aiming to foster ever increasing independence for those students.

