

Grandmentors evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 2009, the Grandmentors (GM) programme delivers intergenerational mentoring projects for young people transitioning from care. A mentor will typically be aged 50 years or over and a mentee will typically be aged 16-24. The programme recruits older volunteers to use their life experience and skills to provide emotional and practical support to young people transitioning from the care system to independent living.

Recent data and published research on care leavers confirms that they have significantly poorer outcomes than the general population. Over a third of care leavers aged 19 are not in employment, education, or training. For those in education, their attainment is lower than for the general population. Similarly, care leavers have significantly lower scores of wellbeing compared to young people with no care experience. Their wellbeing scores also appear to drop once they leave care. Unaccompanied asylum seekers are an important sub-population of care leavers, with particular needs and vulnerabilities relating to their experiences prior to claiming asylum in the UK and, in some cases, to ongoing uncertainty as to their immigration status.

In May 2018, the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (PERU) was appointed by Volunteering Matters to conduct the evaluation of the expansion of the Grandmentors programme. The key aim of the evaluation was to understand the difference that the Grandmentors programme makes to the lives of young people leaving care (its impact), and how this difference is achieved. The evaluation had three parts. This report, presenting findings for the impact evaluation, is the third part. It uses two methods to gauge the programme's impact (distance travelled, and Qualitative Comparison Analysis) to answer the following questions:

- what is the progress towards life goals achieved by care leavers enrolled in the Grandmentors programme; and
- through what combination of resources and ways of delivering the programme is this difference achieved?

In addressing these questions, this report draws on two previous reports, one presenting findings of a process evaluation (Ozan et al., 2019), the other outlining the GM Theory of Change (Ozan et al., 2018). The Theory of Change identified a key overall outcome objective of helping young people transition from care to become thriving adults, through contributing to positive outcomes in three specific areas:

- **improved education, employment and training (EET)**, by providing practical support to improve employability and readiness for continuing education, and by working to improve the self-efficacy (motivation) of mentees;
- **increased autonomy**, by providing emotional support (listening, encouraging, expressing interest), and increasing trust and self-esteem, to increase independent living skills; and
- **increased wellbeing**, by supporting mentees to engage with cultural and social events, and broaden their social networks.

Mentees' progress was measured against these outcomes at two points in time (with an average of 11 months apart).

Young people who participate in the programme see positive changes in their lives in terms of improved education, employment and training outcomes, their sense of autonomy, and (to a lesser extent) their sense of wellbeing. It appears that mentees joining the Grandmentors programme are more likely to be in education, employment and training (EET) than other care leavers and that during their participation in the programme they see further improvements in this area.

The distance travelled analysis indicates that the proportion of mentees in EET increased over time (25 out of 30 care leavers in EET) and that those dropping out of education moved into employment. Most mentees increased their autonomy scores, with over two thirds of participants (22 out of 30) reporting some level of progress over time. Results regarding well-being are less clear, with over half experiencing some progress and around a third experiencing some decline over time.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) seeks to identify which combination of conditions is more likely to generate positive outcomes. The evaluation considered the following factors as possible conditions for successful mentoring outcomes: gender match between mentor and mentee, ethnicity match, mentees having a care history that includes being in foster care, having a care history that includes having been an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, length of mentorship, and hard or soft matching.

Findings from the QCA analysis did not identify any strong patterns in the data. However, configurations in the data point towards the role of ethnicity matching in the Grandmentors programme. This particular condition appeared to be relevant as mentees that were matched with a mentor of similar ethnic background are less likely to be successful in terms of employment. However, the condition appears to play a positive role when considering education, as female mentees that were ethnically matched were more likely to remain in, or start, education.

Furthermore, the QCA analysis revealed an interplay between ethnicity match and unaccompanied asylum seekers. Indeed, where mentees are asylum seekers and have an ethnicity match, there is a decrease in levels of autonomy. When they are not asylum seekers, the ethnicity match does not appear to have an impact on the outcome. The evidence presented here is not substantial enough for us to draw any conclusions or make recommendations on changes. Nevertheless, ethnicity match appears to nevertheless have a role in influencing outcomes. The report recommends that Volunteering Matters keep practice and evidence in this area under review.

The evaluation concludes overall that:

1. The Grandmentors programme is well thought out, with clear outcomes expected from participation in the programme and a plausible logic to how the programme contributes to achieving these outcomes.
2. The programme is delivered by a team of staff and volunteers who are committed to making it work as demonstrated through changes made following formal and informal feedback.
3. Young people who participate in the programme see positive changes in their lives in terms of improved education, employment and training outcomes, their sense of autonomy, and (to a lesser extent) their sense of wellbeing.

This report concludes with a number of recommendations for the programme that consider the time and resources required for successful implementation, the importance of networks for successful delivery, Grandmentors eligibility criteria, the benefits and limitations of soft matching, the beginning and end of a mentoring relationship, mentor training and support including goal setting, and outcome and performance data collection.