Does Mentoring Work in Rehabilitating Offenders?

Marilyn Merriam

Doctoral Researcher, School of Government and Society, University of Birmingham

INTRODUCTION

Interest in mentoring as an intervention can be traced back to the influential report Misspent Youth (1998) which highlighted mentoring as a promising form of intervention. Goldson, (2008) says mentoring provides a means of working with 'disaffected' young people that typically involves a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and an unrelated young protégé (mentee). Mentoring is also being used in other situations for example in helping people of any age, adjust back into life in the community after being released from prison or a young offender's institution. The aims of this paper are to review mentoring as an intervention and to explore whether the evidence in the literature has justified its use with offenders.

Mentoring has long been used in career development and professional socialisation. Industry in particular has seen an increase in formal and informal mentoring and this has gradually spread to the public sector, teaching and other professions. The basic principle is that the mentor provides guidance, instruction and encouragement with the aim of developing the competence and character of his or her protégé (Goldson, 2008). The term 'mentor' can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. According to Homer's poem The Odyssey, Odysseus entrusted Mentor, the trusted son of Alimus, to act as guardian and tutor to his only son, Telemachus, and the word has come to mean a loyal, wise and trusted teacher and friend, (Dondero, 1997).

The general feature of all mentoring programmes is the contact of a less experienced, or in criminal justice 'at-risk' individual with a positive role model. The mentor is more experienced and often older in the hope that the mentor can provide guidance, advice and encouragement that helps to develop the character of the mentee (Rhodes, 1992).

A mentor can be defined as 'someone who helps others to achieve their potential' (Shea, 1992) and may provide that help by a variety of modes of relationship (Pawson, 2006). However, one of the main difficulties with this approach is pinning down precisely what is involved and what is to be expected. Developing a clear definition is complicated by the fact that mentoring practices vary

and may include one or more of the following: facilitation, coaching, buddying, befriending, counselling, tutoring, teaching, confidant, expert lifestyling, role modelling and emergency hot-line number. (Porteous, 1998; Skinner and Fleming, 1999; St James Roberts and Samlal Singh, 1999).

Mentoring is described as an elastic term, which encompasses a variety of approaches; helping, coaching, tutoring, counselling, sponsoring, befriending, bonding, trusting, role-modelling, mutual learning, direction-setting, progress-chasing, sharing experience, respite provision, sharing a laugh, widening horizons, resilience building, showing ropes, informal apprenticeships, providing openings kindness of strangers, sitting by Nellie, treats for bad boys and girls, the Caligula Phenomenon, power play, tours of middle-class life, and so on and so forth (Pawson, 2006).

Befriending is almost always included in the definition of mentoring and ideally creates bonds of trust and the sharing of new experiences so that the mentee recognises the legitimacy of other people and other perspectives. Direction-setting promotes further self-reflection through the discussion of alternatives so that the mentee reconsiders their loyalties, values and ambitions. Coaching coaxes and cajoles the mentee into acquiring the skills, assets, credentials and testimonials required to enter the mainstream. Sponsoring works by advocating and networking on behalf of the mentee to gain the requisite insider contacts and opportunities. (Pawson, 2006).

Added to this definitional difficulty, mentoring lacks a strong theoretical base. There is a lack of consensus about what the mentoring role is and its theoretical basis has not been fully established. (Gay and Stephenson, 1998). What Philip (2000) describes as 'the classical model of mentoring' is said to rest on an uncritical acceptance of traditional developmental theories of youth, and makes gender-bound assumptions about family and organization whilst neglecting structural conditions including poverty and social exclusion. Philip concludes that the classical model of mentoring is highly individualistic having at its heart a relationship that is essentially private and isolated from a young person's stated needs. Other commentators have noted that the way in which mentoring may be expected to bring about changes in young people's attitudes, behaviours or lifestyles is far from clear. As such, it has been argued that mentoring needs to be more clearly theorized. (Newburn and Shiner 2005).

The centralist top-down approaches to working with offenders over the last decade are increasingly being criticized as ineffective in reducing reoffending and in particular the 'one size fits all approach' (Brayford et al, 2010). Critics of this argue that those in control of probation and the youth justice service are generally not practitioners and this has led to an over reliance on cognitive behaviourism and group delivery while the effectiveness of the relationships between the supervisor and supervisee as part of the community order has tended to be downplayed. Practitioners however would see this relationship as fundamental to effectiveness (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). Performance targets for probation, it has been argued have been given more prominence and have tended to "skew practice and become an end in themselves, rather than a means to improved practice overall" (Raine, 2002: 338).

Practitioners argue that more creative ideas are required when working with offenders, so that the method used will better fit the offender (Brayford et al, 2010). Mentoring may work for some offenders in redirecting the path they are taking in life but why doesn't it work for everybody? So how has mentoring been used to date and how effective has it been?

MENTORING AS AN INTERACTION IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Mentoring has been promoted in government for several years now although the evidence of its success has not been firmly established. Some research does show that mentoring can work for some people but it is not always successful. The popularity of mentoring has been based largely on its 'commonsense' appeal rather than convincing evidence of its effectiveness. There is surprisingly little empirical research on the subject, (Goldson, B., 2008).

In criminal justice the term mentoring describes a formal relationship between two strangers, instigated by a third party, who intentionally matches the mentor with the mentee according to the needs of the latter as part of a planned intervention or programme. It is in the development of essential interpersonal skills and behavioural competencies that mentoring is seen as a means of helping vulnerable young people as a way of compensating for a variety of perceived inadequacies in areas such as family life, parental support and educational provision (Rhodes et al, 1992). Adult mentors it has been suggested (Home Office, 1997) can offer young people from unstable family environments an alternative source of practical help, emotional support, guidance and care, as well as provide them with a positive role model. The theoretical foundation for this view is found within developmental psychology (Hamilton and Darling, 1989).

The official guidance to mentoring schemes was: "Youth offending teams may also find that referral to a mentoring scheme can be a useful way of reinforcing the rehabilitation programme, either as part of it or in support. Mentoring schemes are designed to help support young people, assisting them to achieve their goals and resist negative peer pressure... Mentors are trained to be supportive and non-judgmental. Some schemes are designed specifically for young offenders." (Home Office, 2002).

Mentoring in youth offending usually involves pairing a young person with an older volunteer who acts as a role model and friend, and aims for constructive changes in the life and behaviour of the young person. Evidence suggests that the impact of mentoring on young people is strongest when emotional support forms a key element of the process (Tolan et al, 2008). This typically concentrates on young people who for varying reasons, are considered to be at risk of offending. This may be because of disruptive behaviour, non-attendance at school or contact with the youth justice system. Mentors and mentees typically interact for around two hours a week and may meet for a coffee, help with schoolwork, give advice and help on searching for a job or provide advice and support towards achieving some other set of previously agreed objectives. These objectives will vary according to the needs of the mentee but will usually combine leisure activities with some form of education, training or pastoral support. Mentoring is frequently linked to other forms of intervention such as bail supervision, or drugs advice with the mentor's role adjusting accordingly. One of the benefits of mentoring is that it is flexible, the mentor's role and the mentoring model can include older to younger peer and group mentoring as well as the more usual adult to young person relations. Mentoring is adaptable to the circumstances of the mentee which may range from being in prison to designated at risk of offending.

Mentoring may also vary according to who has responsibility for organising the project as this may be a national voluntary agency, a youth offender team or a local community group. The mentoring scheme may be part of a wider project or a 'stand-alone' initiative. It is usually a project coordinator's task to recruit and train volunteer mentors and match them with mentees referred to the project. The structure and organisation of mentoring support roles can vary markedly from one mentoring scheme to another. The nature, structure and content of the mentoring role is determined by a number of factors, such as the specific aims and objectives of the programme, the perceived needs and problems experienced by the target group of potential mentees, the nature of the institutional or community context in which the scheme operates and the resources available for supporting it (Home Office, 2008).

Dubois (2002) found that practice design theory was significant in the success of mentoring. Key factors were:

- Initial and on-going training for mentors;
- Structured and varied activities for mentors and young people;
- Developmentally sensitive goal setting with young people;
- Clear expectations for the frequency of contact;
- The support and involvement of parents;
- Structured support and supervision for the relationship.

EVALUATION OF MENTORING AS AN INTERVENTION

Mentoring within criminal justice was first pioneered in the USA especially the Big Brother Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) initiative. This initiative was established by Ernest Coulter a court clerk from New York City in 1904. BBBSA claims to be one of the biggest mentoring programmes in the world and targets young people with 'associated risk factors', including residence in a single-parent home or a history of abuse or neglect. The young person is paired with an unrelated adult volunteer, whom they meet between two and four times a month for at least a year, with an average meeting lasting approximately four hours. The programme is not aimed at specific 'problems' but rather, focuses on developing the 'whole person' (Tiernay et al, 1995, Grossman and Tiernay, 1998). Tiernay et al's evaluation of this long-standing project drew from a pool of 959 young people aged 10–16 years who had applied to the project. The researchers compared outcomes for a randomly assigned 'treatment' group of young people – those who were matched with a mentor and a control group who were placed on a waiting list. After 18 months, young people in the first group were found to be 46% less likely to use illegal drugs and alcohol, 52% less likely to miss a day at school and 27% less likely to hit someone. Few other studies have replicated the experimental approach used by Tiernay et al., or the size of the sample.

There have been relatively few studies of mentoring schemes in the UK but what little research has been undertaken has yielded some positive results (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007). The Dalston Youth Project (DYP) was one of the first mentoring programmes to be established in England and was set up in 1994 by Crime Concern in the London Borough of Hackney. DYP targets 'disaffected' young people. Mentoring here forms a key component of a wider programme that includes two residential courses and education, training and careers advice. Notices were placed in local libraries, shops, banks and building societies to attract volunteer mentors from the local community and also advertisements were placed in a wide range of publications. The first part of the project was aimed at 15–18 year olds and part two was aimed at 11–14 year olds. This is an ongoing project, which aims to build skills and confidence through one-to-one mentoring relationships with adult volunteers, alongside a structured education and careers programme. Its stated aims are to reduce youth crime and other at-risk behaviour within the target group; to help 'at-risk' young people back into education, training and employment, increase motivation to learn, encouraging young people to adopt a safer, more socially acceptable lifestyle; reducing conflict with parents and other adults. The initiative also sets out to enable community members to become involved in solving community problems through volunteering (Goldson, 2008), and being trained and supported by the project. The justification for this project is based on the belief that young people are at risk of offending if they come from unstable family backgrounds and have poor relationships with their parents (Grossman and Tierney, 1998; Newburn and Shiner, 2005; O'Donnell, Lydgate and Fo, 1979). The researchers found that young people who received inadequate parental supervision and had delinquent siblings and peers were more likely to offend. Poor performance at school and truancy, together with disruptive behaviour and low levels of achievement were also associated with delinquency.

Mentor and mentees are matched following the first residential which includes outward-bound activities, action planning exercises, games, videos etc. The education and careers component includes a college 'taster' course, a pre-employment training programme and classes on interpersonal skills. Mentors and mentees are encouraged to meet on a weekly basis for approximately two hours over the course of a year. This may involve trips out, meetings in cafes and encouraging and supporting the mentee to realise the goals that have been set in the wider programme. DYP is widely considered to be a successful project and, within two years of being set up, was cited as an example of good practice in the Audit Commission's (1996) Misspent Youth – review of youth justice, but it is a 'mentoring plus' model which requires significant resources. (Home Office, 2008).

These outward bound activities have been further developed in schemes run by the Forestry Commission in partnership with prisons and

probation services in England as a 'what else works' offender management model (Carter and Pycroft, 2010).

Mentoring was given a further boost by the election of a Labour government in 1997 as it fitted with an emphasis on social inclusion, civic renewal and community responsibility. By 2000, the Youth Justice Board had funded almost 100 mentoring schemes, and the Home Office had also become a significant funder of local mentoring programmes which currently numbers 40 throughout the country. Many of these schemes simply deliver the mentoring component of the Dalston model, arranging matches and providing ongoing support to mentors and mentees. When it is part of a youth offender team package part of the mentor's role may be to attend court with a young person and may be geared towards prevention and rehabilitation.

What is the Impact of Mentoring?

Tarling et al's (2004) national evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's mentoring projects is the largest study of the impact of mentoring undertaken in the UK. The evaluation involved over 3,500 young people referred to mentoring schemes and over 1,700 mentors. One year later in 2005, 359 young people were followed up. Of those, 55% had been reconvicted, a figure much higher than the 26% obtained in Home Office reconviction studies for young people who had committed offences nationally. There was also a slight increase in offending after the project, an estimated 2.1 offences before and 2.6 afterwards. There was no clear evidence that the seriousness of the offending had changed. The study concluded that even taking into account some differences between the comparison cohorts, those on mentoring projects had slightly higher reconviction rates. The age of the young person at the time they joined the project was found to be significant, with those aged between 10 and 13 less likely to receive a further caution or conviction for a subsequent offence than those aged between 14 and 17. The age at which the young person started offending was highly significant with 62% of those committing their first offence between the ages of 10 and 13 reoffending compared with 42% of those committing their first offence between the ages of 14 and 17. Only 30% of those who had committed only one offence reoffended, whereas just over 80% of those with at least 10 previous offences committed further crimes. The lowest rates of reoffending were associated with those young people who had been given a reprimand or caution or a final warning (less than 40%). Young people who had received community orders or a custodial sentence were much more likely to reoffend (Stephenson et al, 2007).

Young people excluded from school and thereby deemed to be at risk of offending may be referred for mentoring so as to try and ensure there is no deterioration in their behaviour. There are several schemes now established in young offender institutions where the aim is to assist the young person in finding work, somewhere to live and other essentials needed for re-settling back into society when they leave custody. At the 'Trailblazers' project at Feltham volunteers visit young people on a two weekly basis towards the end of their sentence and continue to meet them for a period of up to six months following their release. They report only 17% of the 210 young offenders they had worked with had reoffended. (Trailblazers, 2002).

Evaluations have been criticized for their scale and design and low methodological quality (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007). Jolliffe and Farrington did a rapid evidence assessment and using a number of searching strategies found 18 studies that met their inclusion criteria. Some studies showed that mentoring was most effective the greater the average duration of contact between mentor and mentee. In smaller scale studies, and when mentoring was combined with other interventions re-offending was reduced by approximately 4–11 percent. In studies with higher methodological quality however, they found little evidence that mentoring reduced reoffending, suggesting that the inadequate control of pre-existing differences between those who received mentoring and the control group, that did not receive mentoring, might have contributed to the positive results. In addition only two of the studies (Newburn and Shiner, 2005 and St. James-Roberts et al, 2005) were conducted in the UK and they said they were of lower methodological quality, further limiting the generalisability of the findings as an indication for the use of mentoring in this country.

The Benefits of Mentoring

Many young people talk positively about having had a mentor, and some other evaluations that have been conducted have yielded some positive results. An evaluation of BBBSA which had an experimental design, reported substantial benefits for participants in relation to drug and alcohol use, violent episodes and school attendance (Sherman et al, 1997). The largest evaluation of mentoring in Britain to date also pointed to some positive outcomes; specifically in relation to engagement in education, training and work, though not offending (Newburn and Shiner, 2005). Under these circumstances, mentoring can best be described as a 'promising approach to crime prevention' (Sherman et al, 1997).

Although evidence of usefulness in reoffending varies, mentoring programmes can be effective tools for enhancing the positive development of youth. Mentored youth are likely to have fewer absences from, and better attitudes to school, fewer incidents of hitting others, less drug and alcohol use, more positive attitudes toward their elders and toward helping in general and improved relationships with their parents. (Jekielek et al, 2002). Jekielek, also highlighted factors that can undermine the effectiveness of mentoring. Some of these are to do with the particular circumstances of the young person, and some are concerned with the organisation of the scheme; for instance, the level of supervision and training provided for mentors, the frequency of contact and flexible agendas. Young people facing environmental risk or disadvantage were found to benefit most from mentoring. On the other hand, young people with personal risk factors could be damaged by mentoring unless extensive amounts of specialised assistance were carried out by relevant professionals prior to referral. (Dubois et al, 2002). In addition, young people with significant personal risk were only able to benefit from mentoring if very careful attention was paid to matching the young person with a suitable mentor, together with ongoing support for the relationship, (Stephenson et al, 2007).

In the UK (St. James-Roberts and Singh, 1999) evaluated the outcomes from the CHANCE (UK) programme in which trained mentors worked one-to-one with primary school children who exhibited behavioural difficulties and allied risk factors. Early intervention with these children was intended to support and redirect them from more serious long-term problems. The preliminary findings revealed that both parents and teachers observed positive changes in the children's behaviour, claiming that they were better behaved, more controlled, more confident and better able to communicate their feelings and emotions. There was also some evidence of an improvement in academic work, however the outcome evaluation (St. James-Roberts and Singh, 2000) showed no real impact; 'the mentored children improved in their behaviours but equivalent improvements were found in a control group who had not had mentors. Both groups continued to have serious problems'.

MAKING MENTORING MORE EFFECTIVE

Jolliffe and Farrington found that mentoring in general is promising although not a proven intervention. When combined with other interventions and where mentors and mentees met at least weekly and spent longer together per meeting (longer than five or more hours) mentoring was regarded as successful in its impact on re-offending, but only as long as the mentoring continued. This raises the question of what is the optimum period for mentoring. The connect project in West Mercia provided up to 12 hours one-to-one mentoring support to ex-offenders during the first three months in the community after release from prison. Some research suggests longer mentoring periods may be optimal in terms of reducing reoffending (Ministry of Justice, 2008). The duration of mentoring in the Newburn and Shiner, (2005) study was 10–12 months with weekly contact and a total mentoring time of 572 hours. The duration of the St. James-Roberts et al study, (2005) was seven months with monthly contact and an estimated total mentoring time of eight hours. Jolliffe and Farrington found that the beneficial effects of the mentoring programmes did not increase with the total period of mentoring in that there was not a relationship between the total duration of mentoring and the reduction in re-offending. The longer term mentoring programmes had less impact. It was suggested this may be because as mentoring programmes continue they become less effective possibly because identifying

suitable mentors becomes more difficult or that more difficult mentees require longer term programmes. Their results suggest that the beneficial effects of mentoring on re-offending were limited to the time period when mentoring was taking place. Follow up after the mentoring period had stopped showed that the reduction in re-offending did not continue. Researchers found that the intensive type of mentoring during probation or when the mentee was on parole were most effective. (Newburn and Shiner, 2005). Grossman and Rhodes (2002) confirmed that length and intensity of the mentoring relationship were additional key factors for success. The most successful mentoring relationships lasted 15 months on average. They found relationships lasting less than three months could be damaging to the young person. This may be particularly so if it is the mentor who gives up after forming a bond with the mentee, who is then disappointed.

Delaney and Milne (2002) describing two pilot projects developed in Sydney, Australia, observed that 'all young people involved in 'performing matches' of six months and more reported reduced offending, increased community involvement, improved self esteem and communication skills and more motivation' ('performing matches' emphasised). Porteous, (1998, 2002) found case studies of successful mentor/mentee matches provided evidence of improved family relationships, greater self-confidence, desistance from offending and new friendships. The successful relationships were characterised above all by friendship and mutual respect, which can only develop over time. In achieving results, mentors stressed factors and qualities such as the need for honesty and trust, agreement over boundaries, patience, and the ability to listen and not to judge. Porteous, (1998, 2002) said that while it is impossible to demonstrate empirically that it is the introduction to their lives of a mentor which has enabled young people to achieve positive changes, the testimony of project workers, mentors, mentees and their parents, strongly suggest that the combination of practical and emotional support which mentoring brings has been a decisive factor.

Shiner et al (2004) found the staff 'burn-out' rate was high with 49% leaving Mentoring Plus by the end of the evaluation. A relatively high 'drop out' rate is also noted by Delaney and Milne (2002) amongst the mentees. They observe that whilst 'most referrals were appropriate' in the sense that they met the agreed criteria, 'most young people were unsuitable for mentoring or not interested. They do not specify what they mean by 'unsuitable' but other studies suggest 'some young people may have multiple problems so deeply entrenched that a volunteer mentor proves ineffective. (Youth Justice Board, 1999). Others have found that the 'at riskiness' of young people is negatively correlated with the success of the mentoring relationship – the more problematic the young person's circumstances, the less likely the relationship is to work (Porteous, 1998a; Crimmens and Storr, 1998).

Factors Affecting Mentoring Success

Shiner et al (2004) identified location as being a significant factor in the success of the Mentoring Plus programmes evaluated. Only one project had its own premises, which was considered important by the staff working there, particularly with respect to the young people feeling able to participate fully in the programme. The other projects shared premises with other community groups and staff raised concerns that the projects were inaccessible and/or unappealing because they were located a long way from where the young people lived and/or because they were based in unsafe and inappropriate locations. While it may be important that the mentoring relationship is built around a young person's community, and work done within it is geared towards helping young people engage more effectively with it, this could also limit its scope. A mentor may bring new awareness and knowledge about the community or other communities.

Many young people in the Tarling et al (2004) evaluation of the Youth Justice Board mentoring projects grew tired of the mentoring relationship and gave up on it before it was due to end. This might imply a need for greater emphasis on the training of mentors and on how to motivate and engage young people in new activities that do have elements of new learning but are non-threatening. Mentors should be trained in the aims of the programme and the methods to be used and there should be on-going support by supervision and monitoring to ensure that the aims do not become confused or

diluted. (Tarling et al, 2004). Assumptions are sometimes made that a young person should automatically be matched with someone from the same gender group, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or religious belief. This may have advantages and disadvantages for example the mentor may have greater empathy with the young person's issues and experiences but have more difficulty in helping them to take a different or broader perspective particularly when there are significant barriers where the mentee may be a disadvantaged, usually working class, person who has underachieved educationally.

The evaluation of the Youth Justice Board-sponsored mentoring projects indicated that parents/carers might be important in respect of the on-going success of a mentoring relationship (Tarling et al, 2004). There were a number of cases where parental resistance had been a factor that prevented matches from being started or sustained. Tarling et al thought that mentoring alone will not help a young person experiencing complex and multiple difficulties. Where young people are known to be at high risk of further offending, more intensive mentoring support in combination with other forms of intervention, may be required in order to produce positive results. For example the mentoring component is part of a broader programme of activities designed to prevent further offending. The challenge then arises as to how far the effects of the mentoring inputs can be separated from the other aspects of the intervention. (Tarling et al, 2004).

Tarling (2004) believes the nature and scope of mentoring relationships can vary widely across schemes but also within an individual scheme, which leads to a variability in treatment that can compromise the integrity of any research design. Their evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's mentoring projects found that 42% of mentoring relationships had been ended prematurely, predominantly by the young people themselves. The primary reason attributed to this was that the young person had lost interest in the relationship and was no longer interested in having a mentor. This implies that mentoring schemes might need to help young people sustain their engagement with their mentor over time, whether through incentives or clearer marketing of the long-term benefits a young person might expect from it. Compelling a young person to attend through an order would be one way of achieving this, although many would argue that this would seriously compromise the voluntary nature of the relationship.

Pawson's (2006) review of the inner mechanisms of youth mentoring raises some significant challenges for practice. Synthesising the findings from nine evaluations of mentoring projects and initiatives, the following conclusions emerge. The functions of befriending practice, direction setting, coaching and sponsoring within a mentoring relationship become increasingly difficult to accomplish as mentors attempt to move from the sharing of mundane activities to seeking emotional, cognitive and skills gains. Where such movement does take place, it tends to be with mentees 'who arrive in a programme with in-built resilience and with aspirations about moving away from their present status'. Selecting mentees with a motivation to change, or providing opportunities to generate such motivation, would seem to be a key learning point from these findings.

Moving Beyond the Basic Model

Shiner et al's (2004) evaluation of Mentoring Plus, in the UK, a voluntary, multi-modular programme comprising a pre-programme residential course, an educational and training programme and mentoring, showed that the programme produced substantial moves from social exclusion to inclusion. Social inclusion was defined as changes in engagement in education, training or employment. The proportion of young people who participated in education, training or employment increased substantially during the course of the programme. There was no such increase evident in the comparison group. However this may be due to the education and training component of the programme rather than the mentoring, but due to the research design this is not clear. There was some reduction in offending during the programme and in a six month follow-up there were similar reductions in offending by non-participants in the control group. There was no apparent relationship either between social inclusion and reductions in offending, although it was suggested that there might be longer-term effects. Similarly, changes in self-esteem appeared unrelated to changes in both social inclusion and offending (Stephenson et al, 2007).

Shiner et al's evaluation of Mentoring Plus concluded that a mentoring project offered within a youth justice setting is likely to be more successful at achieving the aim of reducing offending if the approach has a clearly defined model of change. Most success is gained from the mentoring programmes where the structured activities related directly to the aims of the programme. Mentors and mentees should be clear what those explicit aims are and how the methods they are going to use will achieve those aims. "It is all too often the case that work with young people is undertheorised." That is to say, there is often little explicit discussion of the aims of particular programmes, other than the most banal identification of 'reductions in offending' or something similarly general (Shiner et al, 2004).

One of the criticisms of the Mentoring Plus projects is that there were considerable gaps in the evidence with regard to time spent, in particular the degrees of engagement in education, training and employment (one of the programmes aims) were not able to be measured – commencing a very limited part-time programme apparently counted as much as full-time participation. It follows then that the amount of education, training or employment received is unknown which could have varied widely as a result of how much was actually arranged and differential attendance (Stephenson, 2007). Stephenson et al commented that 'raising young people's expectations too high might be equally damaging if they don't have the resources, both internal and external, to realise their expectations'.

Newburn et al (2005) identify some difficulties in achieving an 'idealised action-oriented approach' in the mentoring relationships they studied. They have argued that most mentoring models tend to 'overstate the centrality of goal-focused, instrumental activities'. This can lead to an expectation that young people will move more quickly into activities that challenge some aspect of their behaviour or provide skills and strategies they need, such as literacy and numeracy. What they found was that many rarely moved beyond a basic model of 'contact-meeting-doing' where the doing largely involved relatively mundane everyday activities. Where relationships did move on, this was usually as a result of some crisis in the young person's life, a stage Shiner et al (2004) describe as 'fire fighting': 'Relationships may stay in the firefighting cycle, revert to the basic cycle or, in some cases progress beyond the reactive fire fighting stage, to become genuinely action-oriented and closer to what often appears to be the ideal-typical conception of mentoring.' What is not clear from their analysis, however, is whether this was due to inadequate training for mentors in moving things on relatively quickly.

Another Youth Justice Board funded project that focused on providing mentors/personal advisers for young people was 'Keeping Young People Engaged' (KYPE). The main aim of the project was to improve education, training and employment provision for all young offenders, but particularly for those subject to intensive supervision and surveillance programmes. (ISSPs) and (DTOs). (Youth Justice Board 2005b:4). The apparent withdrawal of support for this project by the Connexions Service National Unit may have affected the outcomes but it appears to have been inconclusive.

CONCLUSION

It is not clear what type of mentoring scheme is most effective, in particular whether this is something that should be left to statutory bodies or independent agencies, the schemes vary greatly in designs. The flexibility of mentoring, thought to be one of its potential strengths is also a potential weakness. The nature of the mentoring varies from programme to programme. There is no real consistency.

There are examples of peer mentoring programmes which make use of ex offenders as mentors (the St. Giles Trust Peer Mentoring Programme and the Princes Trust One to One scheme) but little hard evidence of effectiveness. There are also many examples of voluntary sector programmes for ex offenders and examples of projects with some evaluation which include the Revolving Door Agency Link Worker scheme and NACRO's Portland On Side project. (Revolving Doors Agency, 2003. NACRO, 2006), (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007).

Large scale randomised controlled trials should be mounted to evaluate the effects of mentoring programmes in the UK, (with consistency in design),

(Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007). This applies to both young and adult offenders.

'Where mentees are disadvantaged young people, their chaotic lifestyles often militate against them sustaining a mentoring relationship. Mentors need to act as persistent 'fire fighters' of the tribulations faced by excluded young people. They must be prepared to rebuild their mentoring relationship with the young person, often over many occasions, in an attempt to regain the mentee's trust and imbue them with resilience. The selection of mentors with this tenacious attitude is a key component of an effective mentoring scheme', (Pawson, 2006).

The European Mentoring Centre describes mentoring as 'a means of achieving development and personal growth' (EMC, 1999: 1). This suggests that everyone can benefit from having a mentor. The position is less clear though in the context of criminal justice. 'Mentoring offers at-risk young people... a positive, non-judgmental and supportive role model. For the first time in their lives, these young people will have the undivided attention of an adult, trained to listen to them and to take their concerns, problems, hopes and accomplishments seriously.' (Dalston Youth Project, 1997). This sounds hopeful. It appears mentoring has the potential for making good the deficits of a young person's past, a lack of love, care and attention and/or inferior opportunities in education and employment.

However, more studies need to be done to assess the actual benefits of using mentoring with a greater range of age groups before it can be confidently adopted and to give justification to the significant resources required to support its use.

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