

What did young people like about BBBS mentors?

- Easy-going, relaxed, similar interests, non-judgemental, someone you could trust, empathetic, honest and authentic. Supported young person to make their own decisions rather than telling them what to do.
- Mentors enabled young people to connect with resources and opportunities that would be of benefit to them.
- Mentors provided a type of support that they were not accessing from family, friends or social workers.
- Trusted and wise adult they could talk to.
- A naturally formed friendship, relationships with social workers were described more in terms of a professional-client relationship.
- Many young people drew on the support of the wider BBBS programme and Foróige.



"So she did inspire me that you don't have to know exactly what you want to do, it's just about making those choices that will lead you to a better future...build a foundation for yourself" Sarah (24)

Acknowledgements

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Full study findings are available in:

Brady, B., Dolan, P., McGregor, C. (2020) *Mentoring Young People in Care and Leaving Care: Theory, Research and Practice*. Routledge: London.

References:

Brady, E., Gilligan, R., & Nic Fhlannchadha, S. (2019). Care-experienced Young People Accessing Higher Education in Ireland. *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies*, 19(1), 5.

Christiansen, Ø., Havnen, K. J., Havik, T., & Anderssen, N. (2013). Cautious belonging: Relationships in long-term foster-care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 43(4), 720-738.

Healey, C. V., & Fisher, P. A. (2011). Young children in foster care and the development of favourable outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(10), 1822-1830.

Mentoring for Young People in Care

Young people's views on how it helps

Current policy emphasises the need for community involvement and inter-agency co-operation for young people in care, as well as approaches that seek to strengthen the protective factors in young people's lives. Mentoring is a flexible intervention that is capable of working with the 'whole young person' in his or her own environment. A social policy intervention, mentoring also has the advantage of being available outside of working hours and therefore has the potential to provide support to young people when and where needed.

Children in Care: Ireland

There are over 6,000 children in care in Ireland, with the majority in foster placements. While many do well in care, the experience of entering into care and being in care can have negative impacts for some. Young people in care may have to deal with a range of emotions around separation, loss and attachment, trauma and stigma. Many children in care experience frequent changes in placement and schools, which undermines their informal support networks and makes it difficult for them to do well in education.

Foróige's Big Brother Big Sister Programme

Foróige, Ireland's leading youth organisation, has operated the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) programme since 2001. BBBS is an internationally renowned proven youth mentoring programme that matches a caring adult volunteer to a young person, aged 10 to 18 years. The mentor and mentee meet once a week, for one to two hours, and the initial commitment is for one year. The focus is on building a solid relationship, developed through shared activities such as sport, music, cooking, computers, fishing etc... The basic idea is that a friendship will develop, which will become the foundation for the young person to learn from their mentor and be open to accepting support, advice and direction from them. All friendships are managed by staff who are employed by Foróige



Research Aim

- The aim of this research was to explore how young people in care describe and interpret the significance of their relationship with their mentor and its impact on their overall life and care experience.
- Dr Bernadine Brady, UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, NUI Galway, undertook qualitative research with young people in care who had taken part in the BBBS programme.

Research: Highlights

Big Brother Big Sister Mentors

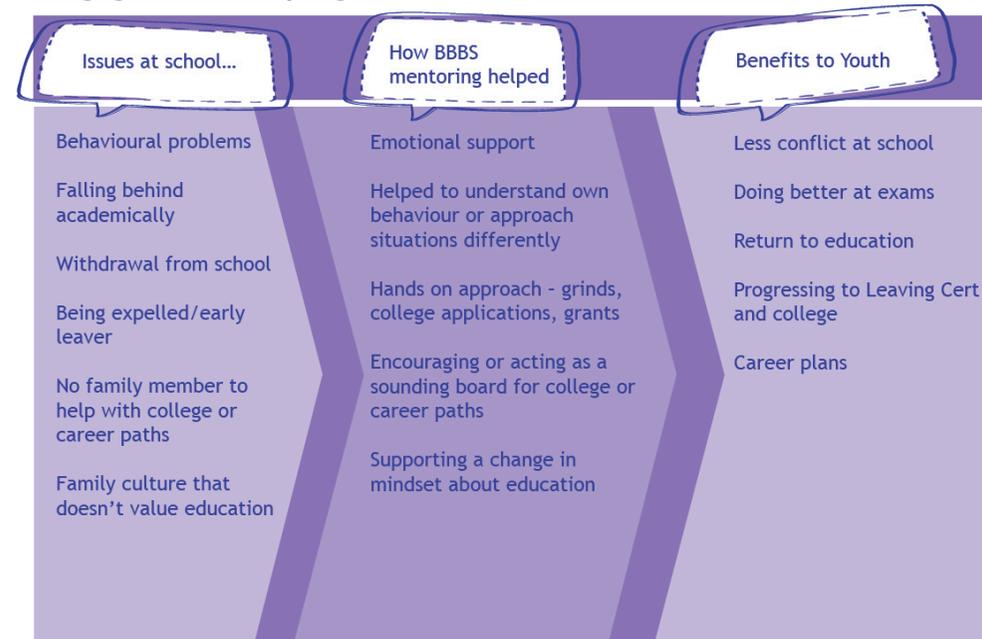
- Support young people to cope with loneliness, stress and anger
- Strengthen young people's resilience
- Encourage positive engagement and progression in school
- Promote feelings of well-being; happiness and enjoyment in life
- Build confidence and improve social skills
- Connect young people with social networks and opportunities
- Encourage young people to take up leadership and volunteer roles in society
- Provide secure base for young people going from adolescence to adulthood
- Ensure that young people are respected, listened to and understood

Benefits from BBBS Mentoring

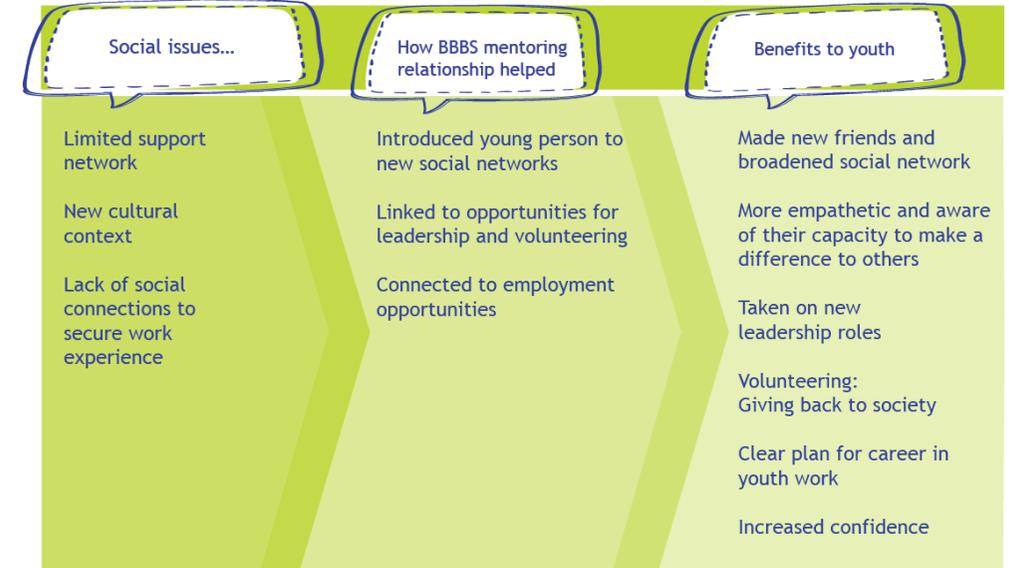
1. Social and Emotional Well-being



2. Engagement and progression in school



3. Social Capital and Civic Engagement



4. Transition and identity

