



Greater
Manchester
Higher

“...I feel like, I know myself a little better”

A Case Study on the Impact of a 6-Week Growth Mindset Mentoring Programme on School Learners



Go for Growth

INTRODUCTION:

Greater Manchester Higher provides impartial information, advice, and guidance (IAG) to inform and inspire learners and their supporters, empowering them to make informed decisions about their educational paths.

As part of the Uni Connect partnership, we work with over 10 higher education institutions in the region. This collaboration allows us to leverage a wide range of resources and expertise to ensure effective outreach and support. Our goal is to create an inclusive higher education landscape where every young person has the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential, regardless of their background.

THE CHALLENGE:

Through a consultation with schools, several key skills linked to student attainment were identified as areas where learners were lacking. These skills included confidence, study skills, attendance, and resilience. Schools expressed a need for mentoring to support student attainment, noting that personalised guidance over a sustained period would be beneficial.

THE APPROACH:

To address learners' needs, 'Go for Growth', a personalised 6-week mentoring programme was developed. The programme aims to increase learner's attainment by supporting their metacognitive skills through effective study strategies, understanding and managing stress, and setting goals. Mentors with experience in higher education (HE) act as academic role models, offering tailored support to each learner.

THE CASE IN POINT:

This case study explores the findings from 14 Year 10 learners from The Derby High School, divided into three focus groups, who participated in the mentoring programme. The study aims to highlight the themes, benefits, and overall impact on the learners.

The lead teacher selected male learners for the project, recognising a need for them to develop their confidence and be encouraged to engage in leadership positions.

THE IMPACT:

Expectations and Impressions

“It’s probably more than I expected. I just thought it would be a few discussions and that’s it, but it was more, more than just talking.”

Initially, students had mixed feelings about the mentoring programme, with many hesitant about participating or unsure why they had been selected. However, they all reported that the programme exceeded their expectations. They felt at ease very quickly and became more comfortable and engaged as the programme progressed.

“I was a bit shy to start with, then when I went in and started talking, it was quite nice and the further we went in, the more comfortable you got.”

The provision of refreshments added to the feeling of being valued and comfortable. One learner particularly noted the welcome change of pace from the rest of the school day.

The Booklet

Students found the booklet useful, reporting that it made the sessions more entertaining and interactive. It was also a helpful resource to refer back to, especially for revision techniques. The booklet complemented the conversations between the students and the mentor well.

“I think it gave us something to actually work with instead of just talking, so we could work on the booklet as well.”

“With the conversations and the book, we had two chances to express ourselves, so if you didn’t feel confident to speak aloud, you could write it down on your page which was good.”

The Mentor

“She was delighted to see us. Every time we came in, she’d always give us the same energy and she was very happy, and that brings out the best in us.”

Students had lots of positive comments about the mentor, saying she was relatable, honest, open, and made them feel comfortable. Providing advice about her own experience was particularly helpful, offering a forum to talk about things they might not usually have a chance to discuss, and getting advice for things they were struggling with, such as sleep. Whilst they didn't feel comfortable talking in front of their peers initially, the mentor's approach allowed them to feel comfortable and safe to share their feelings.

“She was very nice and a very sweet person, so it was very easy to talk to her.”

“She made you feel comfortable when you were in there and didn’t judge.”

Considering their Future

Students spoke extremely positively about the campus visit element and its impact on their thoughts about the future and considering higher education as an option.

They learnt more about what studying at university was like and were impressed with the quality of the buildings and campus, with many remarking that the facilities were 'cool'. They reported having a good idea of what they wanted to study at university, citing cyber security, engineering, law, history, and performance. There was a mix of intending to study in Manchester and considering further afield.

"I think they gave us an insight into what we could do for our future... when I saw [the Law] one, I thought oh, that's pretty cool because now I can see what I want to do."

Students also reflected on the welcoming nature of the visit, appreciating the insights given by student ambassadors and how useful it had been to help them visualise their future career and educational journeys.

"It definitely put [university] in my mind as an option."

"I feel like it made me want to go to university... it just looks really cool and you get to learn a lot more that could obviously impact your future with jobs and stuff, but also the whole base around it, like the massive library, sports facilities on campus and stuff. All the technology that they use. I think it's quite great."

Wellbeing

Some of the top things students found useful were getting more and better sleep, learning to meditate to feel calmer and less stressed, eating better, and understanding their emotions.

Students found the guided meditation, mindfulness and sleep techniques particularly valuable, noting they felt calmer, more clear-headed and motivated in relation to their studies and revision, and had better sleep health as a result. In particular, students mentioned the walking around the room and candle techniques.

"Before I used to sleep with the TV on and it just wasn't good for my mental health overall and once she gave me the method of putting on a sound app, it would actually help as I can't sleep without noise."

"She helped us with stress relief because if you're stressed you're not able to do much since you're thinking of everything in your mind."

A number of learners also reflected that they learnt more about themselves and others, with some noting they felt better able to talk openly.

"I felt comfortable expressing myself more than usual."

Beyond the Screen

"Not everything you need in life is on your phone!"

Another key observation was that they all recognised the importance of putting down their phone, realising the negative impact the amount of time spent on phones, as well as certain social media apps, had on their ability to focus and on their general health and wellbeing.

"I definitely learnt how to sleep better, to get off your phones an hour before and like just calm your body. I tried it and just went to sleep like within 2 minutes so that definitely helped."

"I've started to go on it a lot less than I would have done before."

"It's been like 4 or 5 months, and I've not had TikTok, Instagram."

Revision Motivation

Students also agreed they had learnt a number of effective revision tools and techniques, such as the pomodoro technique to beat procrastination, the importance of taking breaks, managing their time, establishing study routines, and maintaining concentration. This empowered them to be more organised and focused in their approach to their studies.

“I’ve got a better routine. I’ve got a timetable for when I go back home rather than just wasting my time.”

“The programme gave me a bit more motivation and information about how to revise. Before, I didn’t really think it was that important but then I started revising and now I’m ready.”

“The revision skills was really good because it taught us how not to get distracted or how to remember stuff in certain ways, to make it easier when you come to the tests.”

Confidence and Leadership

Students reported that communicating with each other through the group had allowed them to understand how to interact with and read other people, leading them to feel more confident when speaking in front of others. They also reflected that the mentor’s attitude and energy helped to foster this confidence.

“It helped with my confidence because before I was very shy and barely wanted to talk to anyone, so it helped me to get out of my comfort zone.”

Additionally, the lead teacher from the school commented on the noticeable difference in the confidence of the learners, noting they had *“grown in confidence and been encouraged to consider things from new perspectives”*.

Following the programme, two students stepped up to pursue leadership roles at the school, including becoming prefects, demonstrating the programme’s success in nurturing their confidence and leadership abilities.

“I applied myself to become a Prefect.”

Amplifying Impact

An interesting observation was that many learners had talked about the mentoring and what they’d learnt with friends and family members.

This seemed to indicate that the impact of the techniques being taught were being amplified through the sharing of good practice.

“I told my sister about the sleeping one and how she can fall asleep faster because she’s always just tired. She’s only in year 7 and always stays up late.”

“I’ve told my friends about the revision ones.... because I think everyone was just stressed at that time.”

“I told my Dad about the revision one because he wants me to do well and I told my brother about the schedule one because he’s also really rubbish with it.”

Peer Endorsement

All students who took part in the focus groups said they would recommend the programme to their peers, saying it would help them learn useful strategies essential to learning, how to use their time more efficiently, and give them useful techniques to deal with the stresses and anxieties of day-to-day life.

“I did not expect it to be that useful. I didn’t even want to go for it, you know. It was so useful. Like, it gave me a better lifestyle.”

Teacher Feedback

In addition to observations about their confidence, the lead teacher from the school also noted that the learners had:

- Been inspired to think about their future.
- Worked with other students, encouraging respect and understanding around inclusion and diversity.
- Appreciated the safe, non-judgemental space in which they were able to share their feelings, and where their contributions were valued.
- Were inspired by conversations around business, business start-ups, and industries of the future.

“They thoroughly enjoyed the mentoring programme - they never missed a session and were always on time.”

With thanks to The Derby High School



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