

Evaluation of the Impact of Chance UK's Mentoring Programme

Executive summary

Direct quotes from their findings are in italics.

Methodology

All children passing through the Chance UK programme have been evaluated at the beginning and end of the mentoring year using the Goodmans (1997) Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire ("SDQ"). Goodmans (1997) Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire is widely used as a behavioural screening instrument and assesses children's positive and negative attributes across 5 scales: hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, peer problems (the four difficulty scales) and prosocial behaviour. Assessment is for those children most likely to go on to criminal, offending and anti-social behaviour.

Chance UK uses the Total Difficulties scores for the selection of children for their mentoring programme. A child must score more than 16 to be offered mentoring and the average score of children taken onto the Chance UK mentoring programme is 29. To put this into context – a child who is *unlikely* to go on to criminal, offending and anti-social behaviour will score an average of 8.5 (boys) and 7 (girls). A score of 16 is more than one standard deviation above the mean in terms of the normative sample. The Impact Analysis was in three parts.

Part One: Analysis of SDQ scores of Mentees.

The SDQ scores of one hundred children who had been mentored over the last four years were evaluated. The SDQ scores of parents/carers and teachers/referrers and mentors were analysed.

"Our main finding, and a most encouraging one, is of a substantial improvement in SDQ scores across the year on mentoring. The Total Difficulties scores decrease (all four subscales decrease), and the Prosocial scores increase. These changes are of the order of one standard deviation, which is quite a substantial effect.

"Overall, it appears that Chance UK mentoring is associated with a substantial overall improvement in SDQ scores, and that this holds true for all 3 raters – parents, teachers and mentors. This suggests an overall improvement in general behaviour, since these raters appear to be responding to different aspects of a child's behaviour, in different contexts.The improvements are found in each year, for male and female mentors, male and female mentees, and across the range of children participating."

After passing through the Chance UK mentoring programme, 98% of children achieved a reduction in SDQ scores; 51% scored under 16; all scores on the four difficulty scales (hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, peer problems) decrease and prosocial behaviour scores increase.

Part Two: Retrospective study of cases selected on basis of prior SDQ change scores.

Forty of the original hundred cases were selected for further study. The cases where the SDQ change scores indicated considerable improvement (a drop of 13 to 33 on the SDQ score); and the cases that showed smaller improvement (a drop of 1 to 3 on the SDQ score). This was used to gain insight into the cause of successful or unsuccessful outcomes which has been helpful in improving matching and more generally improving the programme going forward. In addition this part of the Impact Analysis concluded:

"Overallthis retrospective study on a sample of mentored children reveals positive comments regarding improvements in personal and interpersonal behaviour control and in the learning of new skills/ experiences (physical and educational).....Moreover teachers generally rated an improvement in behaviours such as concentration and behaviour/emotional control and in the pupils' relationship with peers and adults. This suggests that an overall improvement in the mentored children's general behaviour across their every day life across various contexts and environments (e.g. school, home and outside)."

Part 3 Longitudinal study of Current Mentees.

Five children were selected at random and evaluated in detail before, during and after the child's mentoring. All five were boys aged between 8-10 years old, two were White, two were African-Caribbean and one African. Three lived with their mother, two with their grandparents and one was in regular contact with his father. Two were statemented or had special needs; four had difficult peer relationships and all five had challenging or aggressive behaviour.

The process included monthly interviews that focused on the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. The interviews evaluated the children and their families' satisfaction to establish whether or not there had been an improvement in the child's behaviour.

"The longitudinal interviews obtained from the five boys and their parents/carers showed that overall there was a substantial improvement in all of the boys SDQ scores after completing Chance UK's mentoring. Ratings by the children and their parent/carers generally showed an agreement between the raters on an improvement of personal academic achievement. There was also an improvement in their personal and interpersonal behaviour control"

Breakdown of changes

Child A: -12 in SDQ scales; +2.75 in prosocial behaviour scores

Child B: -10.25 in SDQ scales; +1 in prosocial behaviour scores

Child C: -7.75 in SDQ scales; +.75 in prosocial behaviour scores

Child D: -8 in SDQ scales; +3.5 in prosocial behaviour scores

Child E: -4.75 in SDQ scales; +1.75 in prosocial behaviour scores

Final Thought From Chance UK

Whilst the results of this analysis might seem impressive, there are lessons for Chance UK to learn from this research:

- More intensive work is needed to engage parents/carers during and after the mentoring process.
- A need exists to identify a wider range of services for the most vulnerable children post-graduation.
- A need exists to identify further cost-effective activities that children can continue with post-graduation.
- Further consideration could be given to effective cross-sex mentor-mentee matching.
- Funding could be sourced for ongoing retrospective follow-ups for children who complete the programme.