

Autumn 2010



We are delighted to bring you our autumn edition of our newsletter.

In this issue we are talking about intergenerational mentoring and how e-mentoring can be used to help eliminate social isolation in the elderly and how young people can benefit from the experiences of our older generations.

Fiona brings us her top tips on how to engage your mentees. I hope it helps you make your projects even more successful!

Finally we wanted to let everyone know the outcomes of our user group meetings and IT developments.

#### In this issue:

Intergenerational mentoring

Top tips for mentee engagement

User group feedback and developments

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## e-Mentoring crossing the Intergenerational divide

The explosion of mentoring projects in education, industry and recreation is something we are all coming to appreciate. In the early days, mentoring was generally conducted in a face to face environment with mentors and mentees meeting once a month, once a week or to an agreed schedule. This is no longer the case. The growth of technology and the availability of computing to all levels in society has seen a constant uptake in demand for e-mentoring. Whilst it is true to say the initial programmes have been largely in the education sector we see no reason why this could not be expanded to help bridge the so-called intergenerational divide?

Many of the most successful programmes are a combination of face to face and e-mentoring. This is where e-mentoring is used to confirm what has been discussed face to face and to agree what needs to be done before the next meeting. Given time to think, mentors can research websites and sources of information and then communicate when it suits, knowing that they are operating in a secure environment.

## **Intergenerational Mentoring Programs and research.**

CSV and Lord Freud (JECDA Foundation) launched an intergenerational mentoring programme, "Grandmentors" in the House of Lords in June of this year. It is a 3 year pilot which they are hoping to expand to have nationwide coverage, if successful. The project is being evaluated independently by Manchester Metropolitan University, lead by Professor Chris Fox. Currently the referral partners are Islington Youth offending Service Islington Children's Service and Bsix College in Hackney. Trained and screened Senior volunteer Mentors are being paired with individuals between the ages of 14 and 19, particularly those not in education, employment or training. The "grandmentors" are helping them with career planning, getting back into mainstream education and support care leavers adapt into independent living.



I think there is a huge, untapped resource of older and retired people who could transform the lives of youngsters

Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions said "I think there is a huge, untapped resource of older and retired people who could transform the lives of youngsters, many of whom don't have someone independent to talk to. I also think there's huge potential in jumping a generation to help tackle some of the serious problems facing young people in our society. I think it's much harder to grow up with so many competing pressures, but there are many older people who could provide practical and emotional support."

Lord Freud, who is the brainchild of the scheme, said: "I think there is huge, untapped resource of older and retired people who could transform the lives of youngsters, many of whom don't have someone independent to talk to."

Intergenerational mentoring schemes can not only benefit the mentees but also the mentors. A study which examined the opinions of users of a voluntary befriending scheme found that the need for support and friendship to combat the effects of isolation and loneliness among older people was self evident and all the evidence from the study attests to the value of befriending in the ameliorating of the effects of Social Isolation.<sup>1</sup>

### **Where does e-mentoring fit in?**

e-mentoring provides flexibility in terms of time and location; it helps people who may have difficulty communicating verbally to take their time and respond at their own pace. How many of us know people who are better at opening up on the computer than they ever were over the phone or face to face?? It also allows those with mobility problems to communicate on a regular basis with an individual anywhere in the country/world. To the young it is a natural avenue of

communication and to the old it is a way of continuing to learn and stay in contact with age-groups who they have long considered too busy to want to know! Social networking has shown how this concept has been grasped by millions of people across the world.

The older generation are becoming increasingly e-literate as is illustrated on the Ofcom website: They have established two key factors:

- As far back as 2007 it was found that those with an internet connection spent 30 minutes longer (50%) online per day than the UK average.
- The most popular internet activity among older people is 'communication' (using email, instant messaging and chat rooms for example); 63% of over-65s say they communicate online, compared to 76% of all adults.<sup>2</sup>

### **What is the difference between e-mentoring and Social Networking?**

e-mentoring programmes require a structure to them. In most cases they are combined with face to face mentoring and act as a communication channel between sessions. When using e-mentoring it is critical that both parties understand at the outset what the objectives are and agree a timetable to achieve their goals.

Social Networking is normally an unstructured and unsupervised way of keeping in touch and sharing experiences with a network of friends.

### **Conclusion**

While most of us accept there is a need for social networking relatively few to date have seen how secure emailing can utilise and develop skills across the generations. We would welcome hearing from any of you who have experience of running programmes where e-mentoring has been involved or where you feel it may be a useful add-on.

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### **References:**

1 (Gavin J Andrews, Gavin, Noel, Sheila Begley; *Ageing and Society*, Vol 23(3), May 2003, p349-362 [www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/profile.asp?guid=9b9fb719-586b-43e9-a307-f5c42d978b8e](http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/profile.asp?guid=9b9fb719-586b-43e9-a307-f5c42d978b8e)

2 (<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/cmr08/keypoints/> )

  
Social Networking is normally unstructured and unsupervised

## How do we get our Mentees to engage?

We have had a constant stream of requests for help in this key aspect of e-mentoring. As a result of feedback from our users earlier in the year we have put together a summary of handy tips and advice which we've broken down into the different areas of concern as follows:

### Dealing with schools

#### **Timing is important for schools:**

Early in the autumn term is a good time to start, right up until early May but you must give time for the relationships to develop before the summer holidays.

#### **School Coordinators are very important:**

If you can build a relationship with them, persuade them of the benefits of e-mentoring and get them to give it some of their time, you will see a noticeable difference in the quality of your programme. School coordinators inspire (or otherwise!). Students base their expectations and their perception of the value of the programme on how much the coordinator values it.

#### **Building relationships with school coordinators is key:**

How do you build relationships with your school coordinator(s)? Often it is pot luck but you try to engage them by showing them success stories, engaging them in the matching process, keeping in regular contact and helping them with administration as much as possible.

#### **Get face to face time in schools:**

It is difficult to get face to face time in schools but it is invaluable if you can have a sit down meeting with your school coordinator to show them e-Mentor pro, talk about common IT issues, check that the school firewall allows e-mentor pro emails through and talk about administrative tasks that they can help with such as sorting out incorrect email addresses, reminding students to send emails etc. If your school coordinator is willing to set aside time in the school day for students to email then you are on to a good thing! This doesn't seem to be the norm unfortunately but it can be very helpful for younger pupils.

### You the Coordinators!

#### **Have a smaller number of better run projects - reject schools that don't engage properly in the programme if you have to:**

Many coordinators prefer to have a smaller number of projects with better run programmes and keen school coordinators. Using the



School coordinators can inspire

new reporting features on **eMentor Pro**, you can now schedule a weekly report for school coordinators which you can set up for them to download from the site or email directly to them to show them all the activity in their school.

### **Do the mentee induction and training yourself:**

Especially if you struggle to get your school coordinator on board, make sure that you do the induction and training of mentees yourself so that you can communicate directly with the pupils, then build on this communication through email/texts to the mentees as the programme continues. Try to match mentees very quickly after the induction session so that you can maintain momentum.

### **Talk to your users:**

Make use of the broadcast email service to send out regular newsletters and updates to your mentees and mentors to make them feel part of a bigger programme and reduce the isolation that can sometimes be a part of mentoring.

### **Sort out problems early:**

Do chase up mentees and mentors who are not communicating to sort out teething problems early. If you can't get your school coordinator to do this in a timely fashion it may save problems in the long run to regularly set aside time (especially at the start of the programme) for ironing out IT problems, sending out reminders etc.

## **Mentees**

### **Mentees need an induction:**

This ties in with getting them to value the programme and the time and effort put in by their mentor and the programme coordinators. They need to understand how it can benefit them and how the e-mentor pro system works. Access to computers at the induction makes it more relevant and helps to iron out any IT issues. Before running an induction make sure that you have checked with the IT department that the school firewall doesn't block **eMentor Pro** emails.

## **Mentors**

### **Good mentors make a big difference:**

The best mentors build rapport with their students before moving on to setting targets and planning. "Just chatting" is important and helps cement the relationships.

The best mentors are able to ask open-ended questions and help pupils to think about options they may not have considered or different ways of working, revision and time management etc.



Make use of the broadcast email service



Good mentors make a big difference

Good mentors plan their emails, follow up from previous communications, use resources made available to them by the programme coordinator and offer an open and honest approach to mentees.

Good mentors are reliable and timely.

### **Summation**

We are sure that there are probably more solutions to this problem of engagement and we would be glad to hear from anyone who can expand on the list.

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## **User group feedback and current developments**

We held a series of user group meetings in April and May this year. We would like to thank Nottingham Trent University and Winchester University for their hospitality as well as those of you that attended. We received some very good feedback and I think we all found it a useful platform to share best practice and ideas with each other. We are following up the development ideas that were raised in the meetings and will shortly be contacting you individually to let you know our plans for 2010/11. We are continuing to make enhancements to **eMentor Pro**, carrying on our commitment to making it easier to use and more cost-effective for you, our users.

In terms of the developments rolled out already this year, the feedback has been very good and we have made some final tweaks to the scheduled reporting. We are always on hand to help out if you have any questions about, or need assistance with, any of the new features.

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## **Coming soon**

**In this issue we introduced the Top Tips section which we are hoping to make a regular feature in future newsletters, so if there is anything you think might be useful to you and other users please email Fiona.**