



**READY  
STEADY  
CONNECT!**



*Learning Report*

***This report explores  
the impact of mentoring  
for young people living in  
Hammersmith and Fulham  
through the Ready Steady  
Connect programme.***

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is Ready, Steady, CONNECT?



### Welcome

From Gareth Dixon, CEO YHFF

The Ready, Steady, CONNECT project is a testament to the transformative power of mentoring and community partnerships. The partnership between the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation, Spark, 2-3 Degrees and the Kids Network, which has been led by the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Consortium, has been instrumental in achieving our shared goals. Together, we've worked really hard to pilot a partnership approach to mentoring, for the benefit of local young people and youth organisations.

The success stories that have emerged from Ready, Steady, CONNECT speak volumes about the effectiveness of this approach. Spark have worked hard to connect young people with a suitable mentor. Mentees have not only gained valuable life skills and experience, but have also formed lasting connections with their mentors, creating a support system that extends beyond the duration of the programme. The personal development workshops run by 2-3 Degrees have inspired and galvanised many young people in local secondary schools. And new mentoring initiatives have sprung up as a direct result of the capacity building work offered to local youth organisations by the Kids Network and the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation.

We believe that a collaborative approach has been the cornerstone of this project's success, demonstrating the impact that can be achieved when like-minded organisations come together with a shared vision. The lessons learned, the connections forged, and the positive changes witnessed during these two years will serve as a foundation for building future endeavours.



**“The Ready, Steady, CONNECT project is a testament to the transformative power of mentoring and community partnerships.”**



*Ready, Steady, CONNECT is a Hammersmith and Fulham-based partnership project that provides mentoring and wraparound pastoral support to local young people aged 16-21. Ready, Steady, CONNECT also provides bespoke support for local youth organisations that want to develop their mentoring offer.*

Led by the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Consortium, this project has partnered with four local voluntary organisations: Spark, 2-3 Degrees, the Kids Network and the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation.

It has been funded by the New Deal for Young People Leaders programme and is one of a number of projects supported by the Mayor of London to achieve his pledge of a mentoring offer for 100,000 young people at risk by 2024.

Having a mentor can be a life-transforming experience for a young person. It provides them with a positive role model, a trusted adult, who they can work with to develop positive plans for their future.

This report explores the impact of Ready, Steady, CONNECT as it has supported young people to access mentoring, as well as developing the capacity of small local organisations to develop their own mentoring offer. We want to reflect here on the successes and the challenges of delivering a partnership project and share our learning as we come to the end of this two-year project.

We will hear from our partner organisations, from young people, from mentors and from local youth organisations. All of us share the belief that mentoring matters and we hope that this report helps you to see the difference that mentoring can make in the life of a young person.

# Summary of key learnings and reflections

To summarise our key learnings and reflections from Ready, Steady, CONNECT is not an easy task. We have learnt so much! It has been the first funded project that the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Consortium has delivered in partnership with local delivery partners. We will divide this section into three parts: mentoring, capacity building and partnership working.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT mentoring delivery to young people

It can be intimidating for young people to meet their mentor for the first time.

***Do not assume that young people know what mentoring is or how it can be of benefit to them.***

Group mentoring in the workplace is a great way to introduce young people to mentoring.

One to one mentoring can be truly transformative when a young person commits to the mentoring journey and has an engaged mentor.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT building mentoring capacity in the borough

Very small organisations need funding to be able to engage with capacity building as staff members are often incredibly stretched with many demands on their time.

***Peer mentoring can be very effective and is inspiring for both mentor and mentee.***

Developing a mentoring programme takes time and funding. The Mentoring Quality Framework is a comprehensive tool, although it can seem intimidating, particularly to those starting out on establishing a mentoring project.

Having funding to offer support to these organisations makes a real difference in developing mentoring capacity in a borough.



## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT partnership working

A partnership project is more likely to be a success if everyone commits equally to the collaboration.

Flexibility, open-mindedness and a solutions-based approach are needed as things often do not go as planned!

***A partnership framework – with service level agreements, regular meetings, and shared values and principles – is essential for an effective partnership.***

Difficult conversations with other partners cannot be avoided. They can strengthen the partnership, when handled with sensitivity and empathy. When such conversations are needed, always try to keep the focus on the young people you are working with.

It is important that all staff members remember that they are working on, and representing, a partnership project. Centralised branding and comms can really help to reinforce this.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

***LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE AT EVERY STAGE*** of a mentoring project will lead to an initiative that is more likely to transform a young person's life.

Organisations need to ***TAKE TIME TO EXPLAIN*** to young people what mentoring is, the benefits of having a mentor and the difference it can make in their lives. It is important to communicate all of this in ways that young people can relate to.

***NEW RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE DAUNTING.*** Young people can find meeting their mentor for the first time intimidating. Be aware of this and do all you can to support the young person, and the mentor, during this process.

Giving young people exposure to the workplace is something they really value. ***BRINGING TOGETHER MENTORING AND WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES*** could be hugely beneficial for those who will soon be leaving education.

Creating a pot of funding for small organisations to develop their mentoring offer would be a great investment for young people, enabling many more to benefit from having a mentor. ***FINANCIAL INVESTMENT IS NEEDED*** not only for capacity development, but also to enable new mentoring programmes to be established in Hammersmith and Fulham.



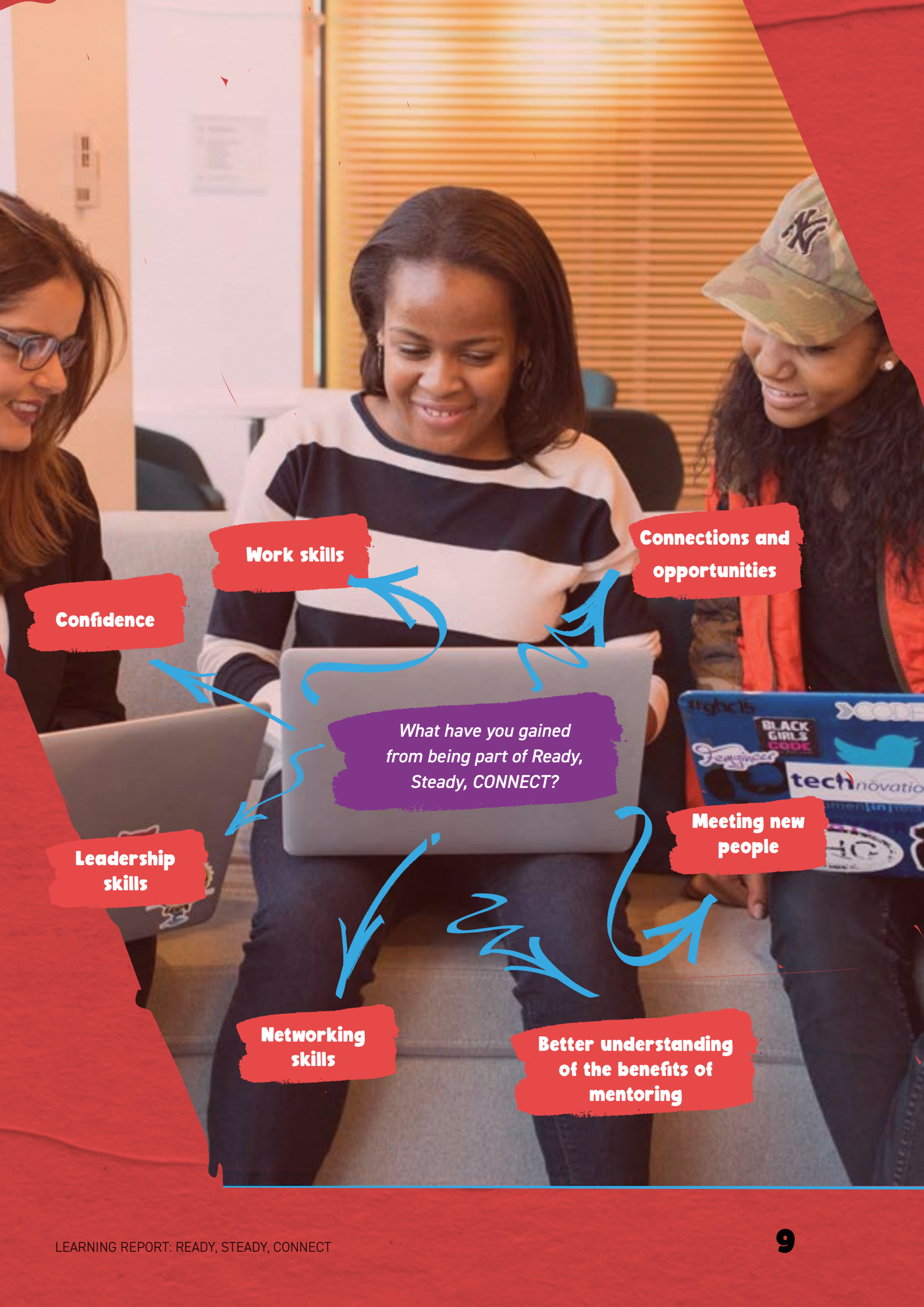
# MENTORING

## SUMMARY

*Young people have had access to the following opportunities on Ready, Steady, CONNECT:*

- *Three personal development workshops delivered by 2-3 Degrees. These interactive workshops have looked at themes that build self-confidence, develop networking skills and strengthen social skills.*
- *The personal development workshops were delivered in schools and sixth form colleges in the borough. 2-3 Degrees also ran a half-term workshop programme, available to those who wanted to catch up on a missed workshop and those who were referred to the programme by a social worker.*
- *Six sessions of one-to-one mentoring with a mentor from the workplace. Mentoring was provided via a hybrid of online and in person sessions. It included at least one session in the mentor's workplace.*
- *Group mentoring over half a day in the workplace – incorporating an insight visit to an employer, speed networking and learning about different career options. Groups of 15-30 young people from local schools had access to this opportunity, with sessions taking place at Chelsea FC, Accenture, GSK, Hammersmith Hospital and JC Decaux.*
- *Bespoke, one-to-one pastoral provision for any young person needing additional support.*





**Work skills**

**Connections and opportunities**

**Confidence**

What have you gained from being part of Ready, Steady, CONNECT?

**Meeting new people**

**Leadership skills**

**Networking skills**

**Better understanding of the benefits of mentoring**



# What are the key successes of Ready, Steady, CONNECT?

*There is much to celebrate as the Ready, Steady, CONNECT project comes to the end of its current funding cycle.*

The young people who have completed all six sessions of one-to-one mentoring have been incredibly inspired and immensely positive about having a mentor. A number would have liked to have more sessions with their mentor, and many have kept in touch with their mentor after their sessions ended.

We have worked with five amazing local employers whose staff have given up their time to host young people for group mentoring. Young people have had group mentoring sessions at inspiring organisations like Chelsea FC, GSK, Hammersmith Hospital, Accenture and JC Decaux.

## A few of our proudest moments

**210** young people have taken part in Ready, Steady, CONNECT.

**123** young people have completed two or more personal development workshops.

**123** young people have completed either three or more one-to-one mentoring sessions or our group mentoring programme.

**169** young people have completed two or more personal development workshops

**“The key lesson I learnt in the personal development workshops was that growth happens outside your comfort zone.”**

We have developed strong working partnerships with local schools and sixth form colleges. We are really grateful to schools that have partnered with us, including Phoenix Academy, Fulham Boys School, West London Free School, Ark Burlington Danes Academy and Fulham Cross.

**“As students don’t get the chance to explore these things in the school curriculum, it’s vital they get a chance to do this outside lessons. Students can be great academically, but if they don’t have insight into themselves, they may never be able to achieve their full potential in life” Career lead from a sixth form college - reflecting on the personal development workshops.**

Working in schools opened up an array of opportunities to engage with local young people in a space where they already feel safe. Although this was not our original plan, a flexible and adaptable approach by partners, and the funder, led us to rethink. A solutions-focused approach enabled us to come together to find much more effective ways of engaging with young people and recruiting them onto RSC.

**“We love their energy and enthusiasm ... they are always able to draw something out of even the most quiet and shy students and are willing to go above and beyond to engage students in their sessions.”**

(A career lead at a local sixth form college)

The successes of all the young people have been celebrated at our RSC Celebration events. Those who have completed the programme have been invited, along with their mentor, to celebrate this amazing achievement.

**“He is a bright student, and I am incredibly proud to support him along his journey”**

(Mentor)

**“I loved getting the certificate [at the celebration event] and meeting new people.”**



# Headlines from young people...

**“We didn’t really know what mentoring was at first, and most of our friends and peers don’t know either.”**

**“We understand more about different career paths now.”**



**“We really liked meeting our mentors face to face. We are fed up with online meetings.”**

**“We really need opportunities to take part in work experience and would love it if this could be part of a programme like Ready, Steady, CONNECT!”**



**“Having a mentor made a difference for me by helping me understand what really goes on in the workplace.”**



**“We have developed new skills and developed personally and professionally.”**





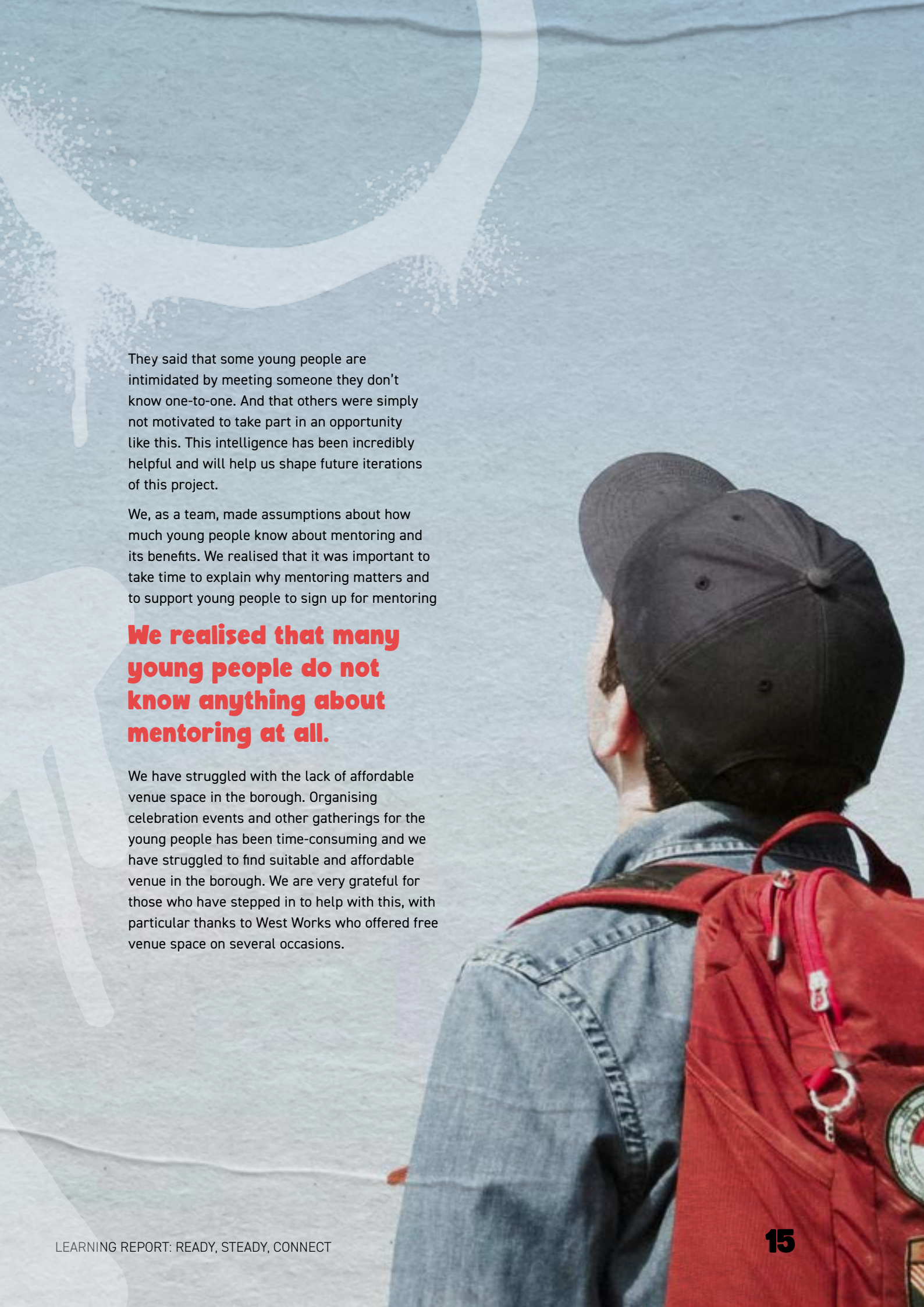
# What are some of the key challenges **of delivering a mentoring programme in the current climate?**

*There have, of course, been a number of challenges in setting up and delivering a new mentoring programme. Anyone working in partnership, or with young people, knows that it is deeply worthwhile but not always straightforward. So here are some of the challenges we have faced on Ready, Steady, CONNECT:*

At the start of the project, we struggled with a lack of referrals. Although everyone we spoke to seemed enthusiastic about what we were doing, this did not lead to much-needed referrals. Thankfully our funder was sympathetic to this challenge and encouraged us to re-think how we could rethink delivery of certain elements of Ready, Steady, CONNECT. We were given the opportunity to try a new approach and focus on working in schools, which worked much better. We are really grateful for the open-minded and flexible approach of the New Deal for Young People team in suggesting that we try something different!

We have struggled to get some of the young people to commit to working one-to-one with a mentor. A number of young people signed up for a mentor but never attended the Meet your Mentor session. Others did the workshops but did not follow up with the mentoring opportunity.

**When we spoke with our Youth Board about this, they said that many of their peers do not understand what mentoring is.**



They said that some young people are intimidated by meeting someone they don't know one-to-one. And that others were simply not motivated to take part in an opportunity like this. This intelligence has been incredibly helpful and will help us shape future iterations of this project.

We, as a team, made assumptions about how much young people know about mentoring and its benefits. We realised that it was important to take time to explain why mentoring matters and to support young people to sign up for mentoring

**We realised that many young people do not know anything about mentoring at all.**

We have struggled with the lack of affordable venue space in the borough. Organising celebration events and other gatherings for the young people has been time-consuming and we have struggled to find suitable and affordable venue in the borough. We are very grateful for those who have stepped in to help with this, with particular thanks to West Works who offered free venue space on several occasions.

## ***What did the Youth Board and other young people say they would want to change about Ready, Steady, CONNECT?***



**“I would like to have had more one-to-one mentoring sessions and for each session to last longer.”**

**“I would have liked to have more freedom in the mentoring relationship and to be able to explore the things I am interested in more.”**



**“I would like there to be of a conversation about how hard it is to get a job at 16 and how young people can overcome this challenge.”**

**“I would have liked the project to do more outreach to other young people so that more can benefit from having a mentor.”**



**“I would have liked to speak to my mentor more frequently.”**

**“I would have liked to know more about my mentor.”**



**“I would have liked everyone in the workshops to take part more enthusiastically and not put others off.”**





## *What do young people and the Ready Steady CONNECT partnership want to do differently next time?*

### *Partnership recommendations*

A number of young people spoke about how hard it is to access work experience. They would like Ready Steady CONNECT to include the opportunity for work experience, which could be provided by the mentor's workplace. This should be at least three days of work experience for each young person.

On reflection, the RSC partnership thinks that the project could start earlier, with young people in years 9 and 10. They could be offered group mentoring within school settings, provided by RSC mentors, which would help them to learn about what mentoring is and why it is important. When they reach year 11, they could then be partnered with a mentor for one-to-one sessions.

We would want to co-design any future versions of RSC with young people from the outset and keep their voices prominent throughout the project life cycle. We, as a partnership, have learnt so much from our Youth Board and we would have benefitted from having their input and expertise earlier in the project.

### *Young people's recommendations*

One young person spoke about how they would like more guidance on putting theory into practice – how to get from where I am now to where I want to be.

Another young person spoke about wanting to know more about where opportunities are advertised. This is something that could easily be incorporated into a programme like Ready, Steady, CONNECT.

Try to make sure everyone stays till the end of the programme, because people dropped out. People are less motivated to go when other people stop going.

Another young person spoke about incentivising those who come at each workshop – having a voucher prize at each session, rather than only having the prizes at the end.

Pay young people to do social media content for the project.

A young person said that we could pay a young person to be the RSC representative at each school. They would be responsible for promoting the project and recruiting other young people onto it.

# CAPACITY BUILDING

## SUMMARY

The Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation, working in collaboration with the Kids Network, have been able to provide capacity building support around mentoring to local youth organisations in Hammersmith and Fulham. The capacity building offer has included:

**8 Mentoring Network meetings.** The Mentoring Network met four times a year, providing space for learning, connecting and networking. This was open to anyone in the borough who was working with young people locally.

**One-to-one capacity building** support for smaller local organisations that wanted to develop or embed a mentoring programme. The Mentoring Quality Framework was used as guidance for these sessions.



# What are the key successes of the capacity building element of Ready, Steady, CONNECT?

89 individuals from 33 local youth organisations have attended the Mentoring Network. They have told us that they were inspired, equipped and empowered by the Network meetings, leading to a wider and deeper understanding of mentoring across the borough.

Those who attended the Mentoring Network also really benefitted from the opportunities to connect with other local organisations and YHFF.

Two of the Mentoring Network sessions were delivered by young people who had been on RSC – these were particularly inspiring for all who were there.

The Mentoring Network has covered a spectrum of themes, ranging from Youth Voice to Anti-Oppression. Content and themes were co-designed with those attending and sought to respond to the real life needs of local organisations.

Ready, Steady, CONNECT has expanded the borough's capacity for mentoring. We have worked with 17 local organisations to embed the Mentoring Quality Framework into their practice. There are now three new mentoring programmes in Hammersmith and Fulham, and other new initiatives are still being developed.

One-to-one capacity building support has been provided by a mentoring expert at the Kids Network, offering a bespoke and personalised approach to each organisation. The Kids Network have utilised the Mentoring Quality Framework, designed by Action for Race Equality, to enable these diverse organisations to work towards a common standard of excellence in mentoring within Hammersmith and Fulham.

Our Mentoring Network model has been adopted by London Youth who, funded by the GLA, are now delivering a pan-London Mentoring Network.





**“It was one of the best, if not the best, meetings I’ve attended on-line. The Kids Network hosted so well, it was very interactive, and I thought people were totally engaged.”**



**“The Connect Mentoring Network has allowed my organization to engage and interact with various like-minded organisations that have led to new working relationships and additional collaborative opportunities.”**

**“Thank you again for inviting me! It was fascinating to hear of the wide and varied takes on the role of mentoring, which demonstrated its sheer potential in the lives of young people.”**



**“I can’t stress enough the value you’re adding –we’re strengthening the offer to the community and bringing huge value to the young people involved.”**



# What are some of the key challenges of delivering a mentoring capacity building programme in the current climate?"

## The capacity building strand of Ready, Steady, CONNECT has faced certain challenges, including:

- *Lack of capacity! We have worked primarily with very small organisations on developing their mentoring offer. A number of these have been limited in their ability to commit to the one-to-one sessions as they simply have not had sufficient time to do so.*
- *Delayed funding support for one-to-one sessions – near the beginning of this project, we were told that funding would be available through micro-grants for very small organisations to work on the Mentoring Quality Framework. This would have helped the organisations we highlighted above who needed funding support to commit to the one-to-one sessions. Unfortunately, it has taken a long time for these micro-grants to come online and so has been of limited benefit during Ready, Steady, CONNECT.*
- *Last minute dropouts from Mentoring Network sessions – each session we had several people drop out at the last minute. This meant that food was wasted and that some planned activities had to be changed to work with lower numbers. We recognise that dropouts are a problem across the sector. It is perhaps expected that there will be no shows for an online meeting, but we also encountered this when hosting in-person network meetings. Has the Covid pandemic, and the online meeting revolution, irrevocably shifted our sense of commitment to events?*

## What could we do differently next time around capacity building?

We would love to be able to hold a small pot of funding for those wanting to participate in capacity building. This would enable greater participation by very small organisations, who would be able to access these funds from the beginning of the project.

**"I can't stress enough the value we're adding, we're strengthening the offer to the community and bringing huge value to the young people involved."**

We would want to focus on relationship building as an activity, not simply a by-product, at the beginning of the project. Whilst the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation did, during Ready, Steady, CONNECT, work hard to promote the capacity building offer and connect organisations with the Kids Network, we can see value in devoting more time to this, with a focus on in person connections, where possible.



We would also want to utilise an adapted model of one-to-one capacity building that allows more in-person visits to the organisations receiving support. Whilst this takes more time than online meetings, the value of sitting in a room together cannot be overstated.

**“Now I have more of a purpose,  
and I know what I will need to do.  
I just need to focus on what I need  
to do and on getting my grades.”**

“

**“The value of sitting  
in a room together  
cannot be overstated.”**




**“It was an honour working alongside the truly inspiring community champions that make up YHFF’s members.**

**We stayed curious together throughout the experience,** working from what the members brought to their 1-1 capacity building sessions. In some cases, we were designing a brand-new mentoring programme; in others, enhancing and formalising incredible mentoring provision that was already in place.

**Every member I had the privilege of learning from brought such expertise, dedication and integrity** they built my capacity just as much as I built theirs!”







## Case study: SEAPIA – Buddies

When approached regarding one-to-one capacity building, SEAPIA (Sands End Associated Projects in Action) were very keen to take part, prioritising the meetings and showing a willingness to meet in person to discuss capacity building. The ideas Julie put forward for us to build on showed a true commitment to the organisation which she now runs and utilised 40 years ago as a child herself.

We landed on developing a peer mentoring programme, Buddies, which would formalise the support that older children provide to younger children while at the youth club. We ran a session with a group of 10-11 year olds at SEAPIA to co-design the mentoring programme. When asked what they would like to do with their mentees, the young people said: "Find out what they like and do more of that" and...

***"Say if there's something about them that's different to me, learn about it and celebrate it, encourage them so they feel proud".***

A pilot project launched in September 2023 which has been a resounding success. None of the young people wanted it to end. A second cohort has just launched in January 2024.

Julie, CEO of SEAPIA, said, "When I retire, I still want to be involved in some way. I'm really excited about this project because it will enable me to be upskilled to provide something of real value to the children and organisation after I've retired."

# PARTNERSHIP WORKING

## **SUMMARY**

*The following are some of the key ingredients we believe are needed for a healthy and successful partnership:*



**Flexibility**

**Clear lines of communication**

**Trust**

*Ingredients for a healthy partnership*

**Accountability**

**Openness**

**Self-reflection and partnership reflection**

**Commitment to relationship-building**



“

**“It is rewarding to be able to know you’re having an impact and making a difference in the life of a young person. Not solving all their problems but helping provide a little bit of guidance in shaping their future”.**

# The joys of partnership working

*A commitment to relationship-building within the partnership has been crucial. Partner organisations have gone above and beyond, investing considerable time and energy to form strong and substantial working relationships. Such relationships are the bedrock of any successful Consortium project. And these relationships will inevitably face challenges as different organisations come together to work collaboratively for the good of local young people. As a partnership, we have recently spent some time reflecting on the joys and the struggles of working together on Ready, Steady, CONNECT.*

- *Being able to do something new together that would not be possible in isolation.*
- *Being committed to making a difference together and then seeing the overwhelmingly positive impact of the collaboration in the lives of local young people.*
- *Coming together with a shared purpose and forging strong working relationships that bring joy and fun to all involved.*
- *Playing to your individual and organisational strengths and benefitting from the strengths of others in the partnership.*
- *Being solutions-focused and together finding new ways of working that work!*

## The challenges of partnership working

Bringing together organisations with different working cultures, different priorities and different expectations will always be a challenge. A strong commitment to collaborative working, and open dialogue around shared values and partnership expectations, is thus essential for any successful partnership project.

Bringing in new members of staff who have not been involved from the beginning of the project design process can leave those new staff members struggling to “catch up” in the partnership. Allowing new staff members time to build relationships across the partnership is thus essential and should be factored into the induction process.

# STORIES FROM Ready Steady CONNECT

## SUMMARY

*One of the best things about running a project like this is hearing about how it has positively impacted on the lives of those involved. Here are some stories from young people, employers and local youth organisations that highlight the difference Ready, Steady, CONNECT has made for them*



# Chelsea FC Foundation

"We at Chelsea FC Foundation hosted a Ready Steady CONNECT mentoring group in November 2023. With the group close to school leaver age, we introduced them to our St Mary's degree programme so they could get an insight into possible routes into further education and gain the skills and qualifications needed to work within the sport industry.

We then introduced the group to a range of staff from across the foundation and club who had followed career paths similar to the interests of the group (received prior to the event) which were personal training, coaching, nutrition and physiotherapy."

A young person who attended group mentoring at Chelsea FC Foundation said:

"We don't really get much advice and ideas on what to do after you leave school and want to enter the sports industry. There is always a big focus on maths/finance but visiting Stamford Bridge and having this opportunity showed us all other careers and pathways in the sports industry that isn't just becoming a football player. I was always a little confused about what else is out there to do in the sports industry so this experience was really good to learn more about sports career pathways. One volunteer spoke to us about how they went from working in the NHS to working in a football club which was really interesting to hear about.

I now have a clearer view about what to do in the future and that I want to continue exploring the sports industry, or even go towards finance and continue to do something sports-related on the side. After learning about the Chelsea FC Foundation Degree, I would like to go into more Sports in Business or Personal Training courses.

The group mentoring opportunity allowed me to work on my communication skills and be aware of how to present myself confidently in a room full of senior people."







## Case study: Funpact

"When I first started having conversations with The Kids Network about putting young people and mentoring at the front and centre of our work, I knew we wanted this to happen, but I didn't really know how to do it. The ideas really came alive when, after being inspired by how the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation involve young people on their funding panel, we switched our focus to involving some of our youth alumni in session development and sharing lived experience as mentors to other young people.

From that point the capacity building support became a vital part of talking through and starting to develop this model, such as how to onboard youth mentors. The Kids Network encouraged me to get in touch with London Youth and told me about the London Youth funding that would help us with developing our youth mentoring offer. As a CEO, it can be hard to find people around to be vulnerable with, so I am indebted to The Kids Network for their support and the opportunity to put some of my ideas into words and then into action and reality. This was such a new venture for Funpact and it has now become a vital part of our offer to the community. The Kids Network was a great person to chat to, especially about new ideas.

I felt very free to talk through things and we had some great conversations as we sounded out ideas together."

“Through the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation, Positivi-Tees had the opportunity to work with the Kids Network on Ready, Steady, CONNECT. Our goal was to create a Key Stage 2 transitional programme for Year 6 students that supported wellbeing, whilst developing their interpersonal skills through an art-based mentorship programme.

Working with the Kids Network’s leadership and guidance throughout the process was second to none. She showed an enthusiasm, insight and commitment to supporting my vision and ensuring its efficacy upon deliverance. She helped create evaluation plans that were tailored for data-driven purposes, Theory of Change Toolbox to visualize objectives and subsequent questionnaires need to consolidate information collected. To add to this, she also facilitated the creation for a certification of recognition for the participants through the organization ‘Open Awards.’

Working with the Kids Network, and with the team at YHFF, has been an invaluable and enriching experience and a lot of fun along the way! They have provided a wealth of knowledge and expertise that wouldn’t necessarily be available through other sources. The team are passionate about what they do, kind, thoughtful and invested in the partnerships they work with, and it is a joy to work with like-minded people. Their willingness to share practical information has been crucial for personal and professional growth and I cannot thank them enough.”

## Case study: Positivi-Tees



“

**“Having a mentor made a difference for me by helping me understand what really goes on in the workplace.”**



## Case studies: Young people

"Carl from 2-3 Degrees came into school during our progress hour on a Thursday morning. The presentation was on Ready, Steady, CONNECT and I was listening. He knew what he was talking about and that's what interested me. I knew after that presentation that I was going to sign up. I spoke to Carl, and he won me over. I saw an opportunity and a long-term one. I was thinking: how am I going to be able to benefit from this long-term? I did RSC because I wanted my mentor to give me insight and the opportunity to learn more about the industry I am interested in.

*This programme helps to develop key skills that you need for life. You can always work more and develop yourself; it's about grasping those opportunities.*

Carl's insight helped me and especially how he shared his personal story about not doing so great in school but flipping the narrative around. I loved having a mentor! It's casual and cool, you can ask whatever questions you want. Get insight into an industry that you want to know more about. Having that knowledge and insight is so important and your mentor can share that with you. I've learnt more about what I want to do and how to progress with these things. I don't want to constantly study and get into this societal idea where money is everything. I want financial security and enthusiasm in what interests me. Since RSC, I have applied to universities to do computer science, including Cambridge University. I am waiting to hear whether I have got in."



"I heard about Ready, Steady, CONNECT through my friend, who convinced me to join because he didn't want to do it alone. My friend told me that I'd be able to get a mentor in computer science. An exercise in the first personal development workshop highlighted my lack of confidence, I felt challenged and wanted to improve it. I also wanted to be more social. I always thought I was okay, but I realized through the RSC workshops that it was something I needed to work on. The most useful part of Ready, Steady, CONNECT for me was talking to new people and getting comfortable networking. Having a mentor is different from finding information online - I got an industry perspective. It has changed the way I understand experience, because my mentor shared how it was really valued in the workplace. My mentor also told me about different work environments, toxic work environments, and how he had progressed in his career. My plan for the future is to go to university, but I am going to be on the lookout for any work experience I can get in tech. I want to find internships, volunteering opportunities. I am going out of my way to learn new skills to get ahead..."

*"Before RSC, I was happy to be average, but now I want to go above and beyond."*

"A young person attending a PRU was referred to us by a staff member. They have a diagnosis of autism, ADHD and developmental coordination disorder. They were keen to sign up and get some mentoring sessions. They expressed an interest in the creative media industry and we assigned them a mentor who currently works at Publicis Media.



Due to the specific needs of the young person, the PRU informed us that there will always be a staff member present in the background on the mentoring sessions and that they will have to take place in school.

At the initial introductory 'meet your mentor' session, Spark! facilitated a welcoming session and both mentee and mentor had many things in common and agreed a plan of action for the upcoming sessions. The PRU were extremely happy with the match as were both mentee and mentor and both expressed, they were looking forward to continuing their mentoring sessions.

The mentor will liaise with the teaching staff at the PRU to organise a visit to Publicis Media's Head Office in White City so that the young person can get more valuable insight into the mentor's role and place of work. There will also be the opportunity for the young person to take part in some practical media tasks with the help of the mentor.

The mentor said they are "really excited to mentor" and the PRU said that the young person "is really looking forward for the next meeting already".

A young person, referred by the H&F Children and Young People's Service, was at risk of losing their place at college due to low attendance. They attended all three personal development workshops, have completed all their mentoring sessions. They also invited 10 friends to our half-term programme and shared their journey as a programme ambassador.





Feedback from young person:

**“I’ve greatly enjoyed these mentoring sessions. I feel that they’ve given me clarity and insight into the path I want to take in the future as well as just learning that I’m in control of my own well-being and that I need to make the choices that are best for me. I found the work experience opportunity incredibly interesting and working with my mentor to learn about the various pigments and create those paints was a pleasure. I’ve honestly looked forward to every session and I hope to continue to stay in touch as I really value your guidance and support. You have my sincere thanks and I hope you enjoy the remainder of your day!”**

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