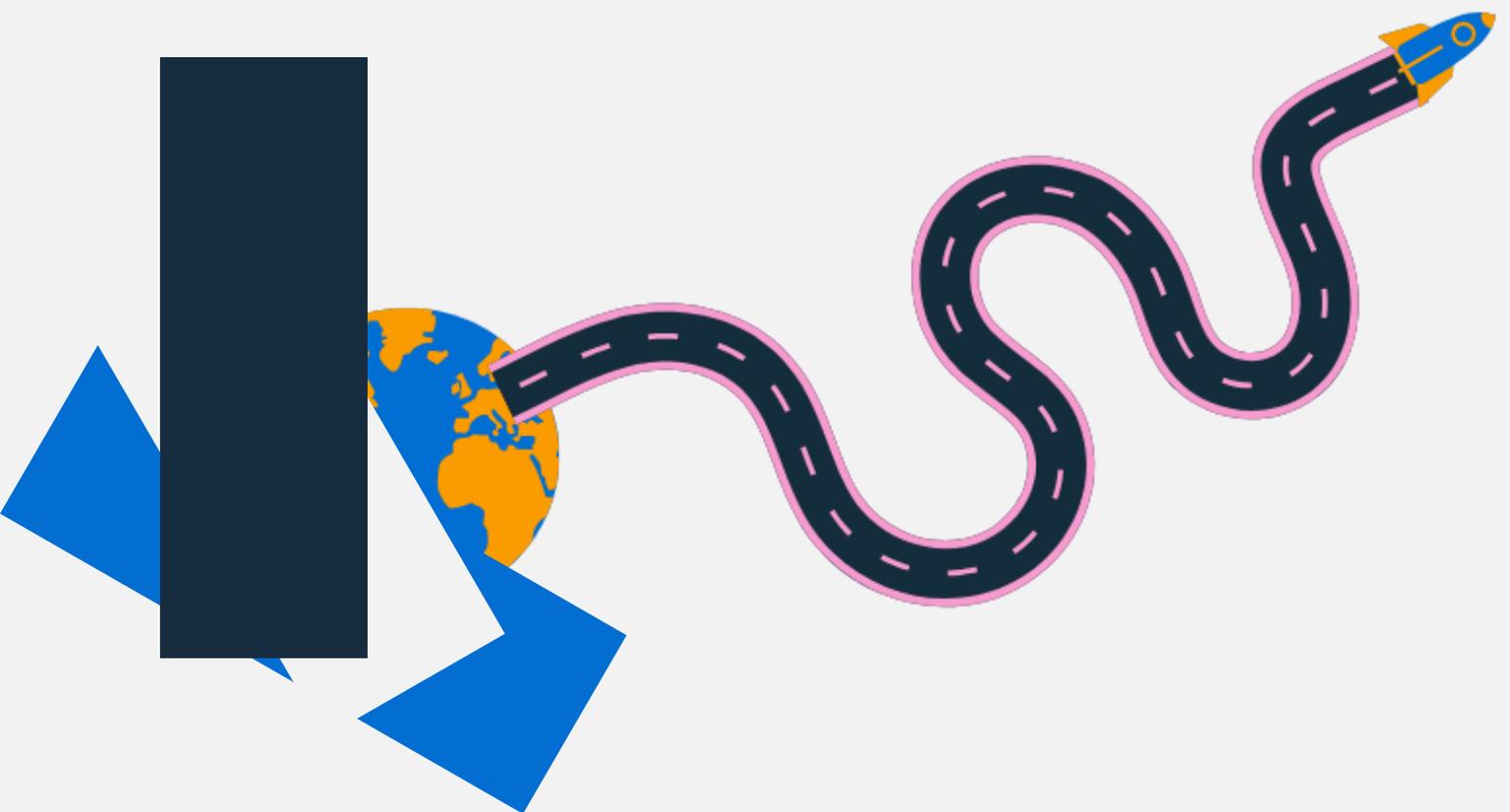




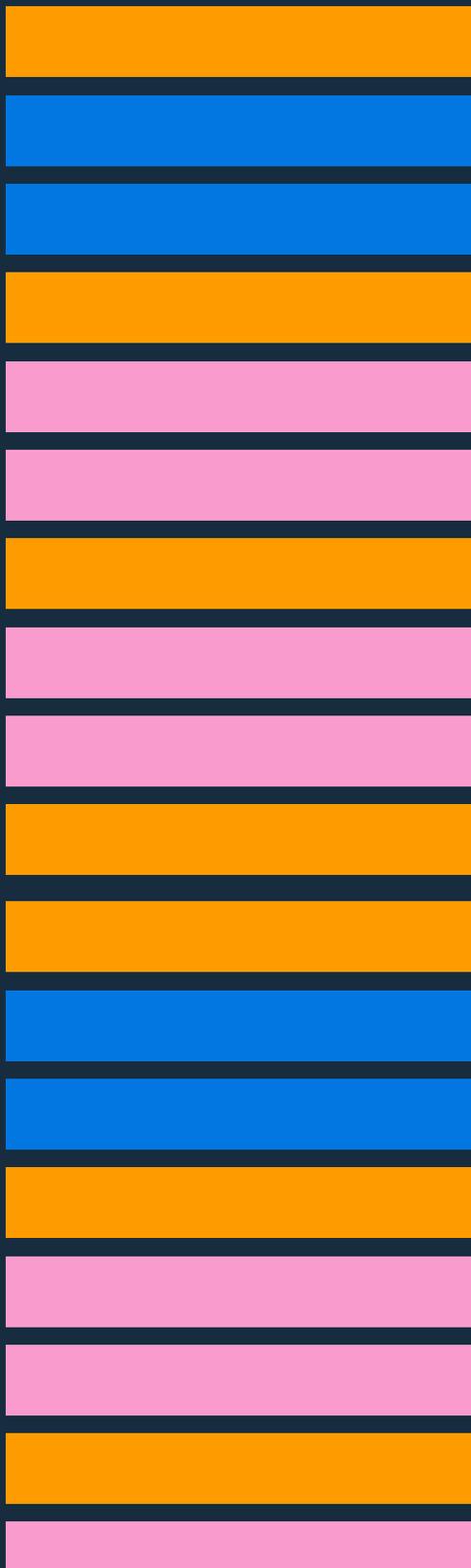
Centre for  
Public Impact  
Founded by BCG

# UNDERSTANDING THE MENTORSHIP JOURNEY

A transformative approach to evaluating  
the impact of the New Deal for Young People



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# INTRODUCTION

## **The Centre for Public Impact is using a transformative evaluation approach to assess the impact of mentoring programmes funded by the Greater London Authority's New Deal for Young People.**

This work explores how mentoring relationships unfold over time, from the first point of contact through to transition and independence. Building on insights from earlier New Deal for Young People (NDYP) case studies, this work seeks to highlight the relational heart of mentoring, and how mentors and mentees experience change together.

We used journey mapping as both a research and reflection tool. The method allowed mentors and mentees to trace the stages of their relationship in their own words, showing what helps connection form, what makes trust possible, how growth happens, and how relationships hold when plans shift. Mapping these journeys made visible the emotional and practical rhythms of mentoring, including the small, consistent actions that underpin progress as much as the formal outcomes.

Our transformative evaluation approach seeks to centre the lived experience of young people and mentors. Rather than assessing programmes through predefined indicators, this approach invites them to shape the categories, language, and sequencing of the journey in their own terms. It makes visible the relational and emotional dynamics that standard evaluation methods struggle to capture, showing how small, consistent behaviours contribute to change.

The map was co-developed with mentors and mentees from over 20+ organisations through interviews, focus groups, and participatory workshops that tested, challenged, and refined each stage. This process surfaced a dual perspective: the mentee view of mentoring as a space for confidence, belonging, and exploration, and the mentor view of it as a practice of care, design, and boundary-holding.

This work focuses on relationships as infrastructure, exploring mentorship as an evolving system of trust and reciprocity shaped by people's choices, expectations, and constraints. The journey maps help us see how change happens in real time, not as linear progress but as a cycle of connection, reflection, and renewal.



# THE MENTORSHIP JOURNEY: AN OVERVIEW

Across the NDYP programmes, mentoring emerges not as a single interaction but as a relationship that shifts over time. It often begins with uncertainty and curiosity, builds through trust, expands through growth, and steadies both people through moments of change. This progression provides the backbone for the two journey maps.

The dual journey maps shown below bring this progression to life, with one from the perspective of mentees and the other from mentors. Together, they show how relationships form, deepen and evolve, revealing both the emotional and practical work that shapes change. This shared structure offers a clear way of understanding how mentoring unfolds.

The maps also show that change does not follow a straight line. Instead, mentoring moves through cycles of connection, reflection and adjustment, influenced by what each person brings and by the structures around them. This helps explain why relationships look different across pairs even when the underlying stages are the same.

The remainder of this report walks through each stage in turn, combining quotes, reflections and synthesis to show how mentors and mentees experience and co-create progress.

## The Five Stages at a Glance

- 1. Entry and Connection:** Finding common ground and setting expectations
- 2. Building Trust:** Developing reliability and psychological safety
- 3. Growth and Stretching:** Translating confidence into action
- 4. Navigating Pivots and Challenges:** Staying steady through disruption
- 5. Stepping Forward and Transition:** Closing well and preparing for independence

# MAPPING THE MENTEE JOURNEY



GLA NEW DEAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

## MAPPING THE MENTEE JOURNEY

1

### ENTRY AND CONNECTION

- MENTEES ARE LOOKING FOR DIRECTION AFTER SCHOOL, WORK, OR LIFE CHANGES AND WANT HELP TO MOVE FORWARD.
- MENTEES USUALLY HEAR ABOUT MENTORING FROM SOMEONE THEY ALREADY TRUST.
- MEETING A MENTOR FEELS DIFFERENT FROM TALKING TO A TEACHER OR PARENT.

2

### BUILDING TRUST

- MENTORS KEEP SHOWING UP AND LISTENING FIRST, WHICH BUILDS SAFETY.
- MENTEES START SHARING SMALL THINGS ONCE THEY FEEL ACCEPTED.

4

### NAVIGATING PIVOTS & CHALLENGES

- SOMETIMES JOBS END OR COLLEGE PLANS FAIL, WHICH IS STRESSFUL AND KNOCKS CONFIDENCE.
- MENTORS HELP MENTEES THINK CLEARLY, SOLVE PROBLEMS, AND ACCESS EXTRA HELP.
- OVER TIME, MENTEES LEARN MORE ABOUT PATIENCE, SELF-CONTROL, AND HOW TO BOUNCE BACK.

5

### STEPPING FORWARD & TRANSITION

- MENTEES FEEL MORE INDEPENDENT AND ABLE TO MANAGE ON THEIR OWN.
- MENTEES KNOW THEY CAN STILL REACH OUT FOR HELP IF LIFE GETS HARD AGAIN.
- SOME MENTEES SOME WANT TO HELP OTHERS THE WAY THEY WERE HELPED.

"Just the thought of having someone apart from my mum and dad to talk to was good."

"When things went wrong at work, my mentor kept me calm and coached me through it."

"My mentor helped me to be able to relate to other people more."

"Being a mentee means being accepted for who I am and not judged."

"I'm just looking forward to getting to the end of it where I can cope by myself."

3

### GROWTH & STRETCHING

- MENTEES SET GOALS FOR SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE.
- PRACTICING SKILLS LIKE WRITING CVs, PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS, AND NETWORKING.
- MENTORS ENCOURAGE TRYING THINGS THAT FELT SCARY BEFORE.

# MAPPING THE MENTOR JOURNEY



GLA NEW DEAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

## MAPPING THE MENTOR JOURNEY

1

### ENTRY AND CONNECTION

- MENTORS JOIN TO GIVE BACK OR OFFER WHAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE GROWING UP.
- FIRST MEETINGS FOCUS ON HELPING THE YOUNG PERSON RELAX AND TALK IN THEIR OWN WAY.
- MENTORS ASK WHAT THE YOUNG PERSON WANTS AND ARE CLEAR ABOUT THEIR ROLE.

4

### NAVIGATING PIVOTS & CHALLENGES

- MENTORS STAY CALM AND MODEL COMPOSURE WHEN THINGS CHANGE OR GO WRONG
- MENTORS HELP YOUNG PEOPLE PROCESS WHAT HAPPENED AND PLAN NEXT STEPS
- MENTORS CONNECT MENTEES TO RESOURCES AND OPEN NEW OPTIONS WHEN THE PATH CHANGES

5

### STEPPING FORWARD & TRANSITION

- MENTORS PREPARE MENTEES TO BE INDEPENDENT AND FUTURE-READY.
- MENTORS ENSURE THAT PROGRESS CAN CONTINUE FOR MENTEES BEYOND MENTORING.
- MANY MENTORS LEAVE SPACE FOR RE-CONNECTION AFTER THE PROGRAMME ENDS.

2

### BUILDING TRUST

- MENTORS SHOW UP WHEN THEY SAY THEY WILL - RELIABILITY BUILDS TRUST.
- MENTORS SPEND TIME LISTENING AND LETTING THE YOUNG PERSON LEAD THE CONVERSATION.
- MENTORS ARE CLEAR ABOUT SAFETY BOUNDARIES AND ADAPT HOW THEY COMMUNICATE SO IT FEELS COMFORTABLE.

3

### GROWTH & STRETCHING

- MENTORS MEET REGULARLY WITH MENTEES TO REVIEW GOALS AND TRACK PROGRESS WITH THE YOUNG PERSON.
- MENTORS SUPPORT MENTEES TO BUILD PRACTICAL SKILLS - EMPLOYABILITY, INDEPENDENCE, CONFIDENCE.
- MENTORS GENTLY ENCOURAGE MENTEES TO STEP SAFELY OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE.

"For me, it was about representation. I didn't see people like me in those roles. I wanted to change that."

"We start with practical support, like functional skills, and gradually build trust and delve into deeper conversations about aspirations and challenges."

"I would say how I've built trust is time mainly. I think you have to be consistent."

"It was just a case of giving that young person as much as I can, whilst remaining professionally the boundary."

"I'd like to feel that whenever the mentor-mentee relationship ends, I'll have equipped them with enough insight that they can then manage themselves in spaces and places that they previously couldn't."

# STAGE 1: ENTRY & CONNECTION



Stage 1 is about the first encounters, the cues that shape early ease and the foundations that make trust possible.

**The opening conversation helps both sides understand whether the relationship can settle.**

The first stage of the mentorship journey centres on open, grounding conversations that help mentors and mentees get to know one another and establish early safety. These exchanges involve asking questions, comparing experiences, and sharing motivations or expectations, which helps build an initial sense of what the relationship might look and feel like. Both share that they use these conversations to assess whether the match feels comfortable, giving mentees space to gauge ease and giving mentors a chance to understand how best to support them.

**Comfort and tone shapes how easily young people could enter the first meeting.**

Mentees emphasised that these first conversations needed to feel relaxed and informal. Mentors agreed but highlighted the conditions that support that tone, including enough time, the right resources, and a consistent space to meet. Both described the first encounter as a moment of orientation, a chance to understand who the other person is and what they might need.

**Relatability plays a significant role in how quickly trust began to form.**

For many mentees, connection often came from feeling that their mentor was relatable, whether through shared experience, identity, or familiarity with their goals. Many emphasised the importance of meeting someone who had been through similar moments or worked in similar fields, which helped them feel at ease and more willing to engage. This early sense of recognition often shaped how open they felt to the work ahead.

**Mentors approach early connection as something that required intentional effort.**

For mentors, that connection is something they approach intentionally, getting to know the young person with an open mind, sharing a little of themselves, and confirming that the match feels right. Mentors also pointed to the practical realities that shape the start of the relationship, including the referral route, short timelines, and the growing norm of online introductions. These factors all influence how and when connection can form, and mentors are acutely aware of the need to create stability where possible.

## HOW DO MENTORS AND MENTEES EXPERIENCE THIS STAGE?

#1

Mentors and mentees begin this stage with different expectations and early impressions. The table shows how their accounts illuminate what supports strong early connection in mentoring design.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT THIS MEANS
<p>Early connection comes from feeling seen. Mentees trust mentors who are relatable through lived experience or field familiarity. Others trust through admiration, seeing mentors as models of where they wanted to go.</p>	<p>Connection depends on credible presence. Trust forms through recognition or aspiration, and mentors need the conditions to signal safety in the first meeting before structure begins.</p>
<p>The early ease feels natural to mentees but is intentional for mentors. Mentors describe designing calm atmospheres, using small personal disclosures, and using consistent meeting patterns to humanise the space.</p>	<p>What feels spontaneous is crafted. Tone setting is a deliberate practice that requires time, space and organisational support.</p>
<p>Entry points varied significantly. Some mentees arrived with clear goals. Others needed time to understand what mentoring was or wanted steady company. Mentees are sensitive to anything that feels transactional.</p>	<p>Mentors must read pace and purpose. Effective entry adapts to motivations, avoids premature structure and keeps early sessions relational.</p>
<p>Small acts shape early ease: listening, simple curiosity, space to guide conversations, and honest responses. These moments make young people feel taken seriously.</p>	<p>Agency must appear from the start. Early conversations should offer choice and influence, signalling that the relationship will be co-created.</p>
<p>Connection was shaped by system realities: referral routes, timelines, online or in-person settings, and the credibility of known organisations.</p>	<p>Scaffolding defines early experience. Smooth referral paths, familiar settings and preparation tools make early connection possible and reduce uncertainty.</p>



#2

# STAGE 2:

## BUILDING TRUST

Stage 2 captures how consistency and openness turn early rapport into something steadier and more dependable.

### Consistency helps trust take shape

Mentees say trust develops through thoughtfulness and follow-through: mentors keep appointments, remember details and show up prepared. These cues help mentees feel respected and make it easier to speak openly without having to over-explain themselves or perform progress.

### Mentors saw this stage as careful, steady work

Mentors emphasise the importance of arriving prepared, maintaining a clear tone and modelling reliability through how they handle time and boundaries. Many view trust as something they need to hold responsibly, because a young person sharing more of themselves requires them to show up with consistency and authenticity.



I think that my mentor gave me a lot of ease. They can see what I'm saying without having to over-explain myself.

- Mentee

### Light structure begins to support the relationship's rhythm

As confidence settles, small routines emerge. Mentees appreciate having a shared sense of direction while still keeping goals flexible. Mentors see structure as a way to strengthen understanding once rapport had formed, using practices like brief reflections or reviewing progress to help anchor the work without making sessions feel rigid or task-driven.

### Practical conditions shape how easily rhythm could form

Pairs reflect on how different formats and timelines affect this stage. Some find online meetings easier to maintain; others prefer the depth of being in person. Irregular schedules or short programme windows sometimes slow momentum.

Both sides agree that being honest about constraints, rather than over-promising, helps preserve trust and keep expectations realistic as they test how time, communication and boundaries work in practice.



#2

## HOW DO MENTORS AND MENTEES EXPERIENCE THIS STAGE ?

Each side pays attention to different markers of how trust starts to form. The table pairs these perspectives with the insights they offer for designing reliable, grounded mentoring relationships.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT THIS MEANS
Mentees say trust takes shape through consistent, thoughtful follow-through like mentors keeping their word, listening without rushing and creating space that doesn't require them to over-explain themselves.	Trust grows when sessions feel easy to enter and honest, giving young people room to speak without pressure or the sense they need to perform progress.
Mentors describe this phase as steady, attentive work like preparing for sessions well, setting a clear tone and modelling reliability in how they manage time and boundaries. They hold trust carefully because young people quickly sense whether care is genuine.	This shows that authenticity and consistency work together. When mentors are upfront about what they can offer and show up in grounded, reliable ways, trust becomes something the relationship can build on.
Mentees see trust as reassurance that they are taken seriously. Mentors see it as responsibility, something to hold carefully as a young person begins to rely on them.	Trust serves different purposes. For mentees it brings comfort, and for mentors it brings accountability that shapes how each side shows up as the relationship grows.
As relationships settle, a light structure begins to form. Shared direction, reflections and simple check-ins help both feel anchored.	Trust and structure grow together. Small, consistent actions help turn early rapport into a dependable rhythm.
Practical conditions further shape how easily trust builds. Some pairs find online meetings easier, others prefer in person depth, and irregular schedules or tight timelines can slow momentum. Being open about limits helps preserve confidence in the relationship.	Adaptability supports trust, and so does infrastructure. Clear expectations, time and space to meet and simple tools to record progress help both sides focus on the relationship rather than logistics.

# STAGE 3: GROWTH & STRETCHING



Stage 3 reflects the shift from conversation to action, when confidence is tested, strengthened, and applied in real contexts.

## Growth takes on more visible form

Once trust and rhythm are in place, conversations begin to move toward concrete steps. Mentees start applying their confidence in real contexts, goals become clearer and the work shifts from reflection to action. Both see this as a stage where progress feels more tangible.

## Stretching happens at a pace that feels safe

Growth is not linear at this stage. Mentees take steps that challenge them, and mentors support this by creating conditions that feel psychologically and physically safe. The emphasis is on stretching, not pushing, and on helping young people try things they may not have attempted earlier.



“My mentor helped with my job interview nervousness, during the session he was really helpful and understanding, and he shared that he also struggled as well.”

- Mentee

## Support becomes more focused

The support mentors offer becomes more targeted as goals take shape. This includes professional development, planning for long term ambitions and breaking these into steps that feel manageable. Practical skills work, such as building confidence or developing public speaking, also becomes more central.

## Action builds on earlier trust

The momentum of this stage depends on the trust formed earlier. As mentees take on new challenges, mentors help steady the process by offering guidance, reflection and encouragement. Growth continues because the relationship now has the reliability needed to hold both progress and difficulty.

## HOW DO MENTORS AND MENTEES EXPERIENCE THIS STAGE?

Mentors and mentees recognise growth in different ways as confidence turns into action. The table brings these reflections together with the implications they hold for mentoring design.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT THIS MEANS
<p>Mentees describe growth as both practical and personal. Some take concrete steps like preparing portfolios, refining job applications or building networks. Others notice clearer decisions, small wins and a stronger sense of direction. Feedback, shared experience and opportunities help turn this confidence into action.</p>	<p>Practical progress and relational confidence reinforce each other. Trying new things, reflecting on what worked and seeing progress acknowledged helps young people feel ready for the next step, especially when mentors bring perspectives they have not had access to.</p>
<p>Growth depends not only on trust but on what mentors can offer in terms of experience and challenge. One mentee said the shift was slower when the mentor felt too close in age or experience.</p>	<p>Stretching requires the right fit. Progress is clearer when mentors bring enough distance, perspective and challenge to help mentees move beyond what they already know.</p>
<p>Mentors describe growth as the point when mentees take more ownership like setting or adapting goals, recognising progress and steering conversations. They see themselves becoming accountability partners who support follow through.</p>	<p>Growth strengthens when ownership increases. Feedback that is direct but kind helps mentees face uncertainty while still building confidence, and mentors adjust goals and pace so structure motivates rather than constrains.</p>
<p>Mentors notice small cues that signal growth like changes in body language, a mentee leading the conversation or a willingness to ask harder questions. These moments show increasing confidence.</p>	<p>Progress is often visible in small shifts. When feedback feels safe and progress is acknowledged, subtle changes help growth become embedded rather than incidental.</p>
<p>Both say growth involves progress and challenge. It is not linear, and young people often try, reflect and try again as mentors help steady the process.</p>	<p>Stretching is about readiness. Growth becomes visible when the relationship has already done the quieter work of trust building, and when programmes create the time, tools and follow up needed for change to take hold.</p>



#4

# STAGE 4:

## NAVIGATING PIVOTS & CHALLENGES

Stage 4 looks at how pairs respond when circumstances change, and how steady support helps the relationship hold through difficulty.

### Challenges prompt deeper reflection

Mentors and mentees both say that difficult or shifting moments often bring the most reflection. Pivots inside or outside the relationship create space to notice what is working, what feels uncertain and where support is most needed.

### Changes strengthen empathy and skill building

When challenges or changes surface, the relational work becomes more central. Mentees value empathy, honesty and guided reflection, and mentors see these moments as opportunities to model calm, offer perspective and help young people build skills for navigating uncertainty.

### Pivots show how the relationship adapts

Pairs describe facing a range of pivots in this stage. Some sessions run smoothly, while others are shaped by missed meetings, personal difficulties or changes in focus. These moments can feel disruptive, but they reveal how the relationship adapts and what support looks like when things are shifting.

### How each side responds matters

When things are difficult or shifting, mentees feel supported when mentors stay patient, open and consistent. Mentors see this steadiness as what keeps trust intact and helps young people stay connected to the work even when setbacks or changes in focus arise.



“If something challenging happens it’s not the end. That is that is good to hear because it can be a lonely time, and if you’ve got that voice in your head of your mentor who says this is normal, it’s going to make it feel less bad.”

- Mentee, 20



#4

## HOW DO MENTORS AND MENTEES EXPERIENCE THIS STAGE ?

Challenges and pivots land differently for mentors and mentees. The table brings their experiences side by side and highlights what effective support requires in design and practice.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT THIS MEANS
Mentees describe moments of stress, rejection or uncertainty from interviews, financial pressure, creative feedback, networking or personal events. What matters most is mentors responding with calm, understanding and space to slow the conversation and make sense of what was happening.	Challenges can deepen relationships when there is room to talk about them. What sustains trust is not the difficulty itself but how it is addressed, and mentors who adjust expectations and keep communication open tend to strengthen that trust.
Mentees value empathy and simple but powerful encouragement, including mentors sharing their own experiences when appropriate. These moments help them feel grounded and remind them that challenge is normal rather than defining.	Grounded support helps setbacks feel manageable. When mentors are calm, transparent and flexible, young people stay engaged and regain perspective rather than feeling judged or alone.
Mentors adapt their approach to create calm, slowing the pace, changing the setting or allowing pauses. They are clear about the limits of their role and rely on supervision, peer support and referral routes to hold boundaries safely.	Handling emotional or practical challenges depends on strong organisational support. Mentors feel more confident in sensitive conversations when supervision, referral routes and wellbeing resources are in place, and underprepared when they are not.
As relationships settle, a light structure begins to form. Shared direction, reflections and simple check-ins help both feel anchored.	Trust and structure grow together. Small, consistent actions help turn early rapport into a dependable rhythm.
Practical conditions shape how easily trust builds. Some pairs find online meetings easier, others prefer in person depth, and irregular schedules or tight timelines can slow momentum. Being open about limits helps preserve confidence.	Adaptability supports trust, and so does infrastructure. Clear expectations, time and space to meet and simple tools to record progress help both sides focus on the relationship rather than logistics.

# STAGE 5: STEPPING FORWARD & TRANSITION



Stage 5 centres on how relationships come to a close and how both sides prepare for what carries forward beyond the programme.

## Endings take different forms

The final phase looks different across pairs. Some describe clear, celebratory sessions, while others experience endings that feel abrupt, uncertain or left open. What matters most is whether both sides understand what comes next and feel steady about the transition.

## Closure creates space for reflection

Mentees describe the final sessions as a mix of pride and reflection. Many talk about what they have learned, what has shifted and where they now feel clearer. They highlight moments when the work comes together and begins to make sense in a broader direction.

## Clarity about next steps is central

Many mentees finish the programme knowing what they want to do next, who to contact and how to keep building momentum. This clarity helps them feel prepared rather than cut off, with a sense of what to carry forward.

## Mentors focus on steady, supportive closure

Mentors see this stage as a time to confirm direction, encourage independence and step back in a way that feels steady rather than sudden. Their aim is to close the relationship in a way that supports the young person to continue on their own.



“When I got the good news that I had been accepted, I emailed him and he was really happy for me. After we finished, I sent another message and he was very kind. He told me I was already on a good path.”

- Mentee

## HOW DO MENTORS AND MENTEES EXPERIENCE THIS STAGE?

#5

Mentors and mentees approach endings from different vantage points. The table sets out what each side describes and what this means for designing clear, supportive transitions.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT THIS MEANS
<p>Mentees describe growth as both practical and personal. Some take concrete steps like preparing portfolios, refining job applications or building networks. Others notice clearer decisions, small wins and a stronger sense of direction. Feedback, shared experience and opportunities help turn this confidence into action.</p>	<p>Practical progress and relational confidence reinforce each other. Trying new things, reflecting on what worked and seeing progress acknowledged helps young people feel ready for the next step, especially when mentors bring perspectives they have not had access to.</p>
<p>Growth depends not only on trust but on what mentors can offer in terms of experience and challenge. One mentee said the shift was slower when the mentor felt too close in age or experience.</p>	<p>Stretching requires the right fit. Progress is clearer when mentors bring enough distance, perspective and challenge to help mentees move beyond what they already know.</p>
<p>Mentors describe growth as the point when mentees take more ownership like setting or adapting goals, recognising progress and steering conversations. They see themselves becoming accountability partners who support follow through.</p>	<p>Growth strengthens when ownership increases. Feedback that is direct but kind helps mentees face uncertainty while still building confidence, and mentors adjust goals and pace so structure motivates rather than constrains.</p>
<p>Mentors notice small cues that signal growth like changes in body language, a mentee leading the conversation or a willingness to ask harder questions. These moments show increasing confidence.</p>	<p>Progress is often visible in small shifts. When feedback feels safe and progress is acknowledged, subtle changes help growth become embedded rather than incidental.</p>
<p>Both say growth involves progress and challenge. It is not linear, and young people often try, reflect and try again as mentors help steady the process.</p>	<p>Stretching is about readiness. Growth becomes visible when the relationship has already done the quieter work of trust building, and when programmes create the time, tools and follow up needed for change to take hold.</p>

# WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT MENTORSHIP RECIPROCITY?

Reciprocity in mentoring develops gradually as responsibility shifts from being held mostly by the mentor to being shared in ways that reflect the young person's growing confidence and clarity.

## Reciprocity begins when young people feel able to take an active role in the relationship.

Once the relationship feels comfortable and dependable, young people began taking a more active role in shaping the work. They identify what they wanted to explore, test ideas or clarify priorities. Mentors recognise the shift as sessions started to reflect the young person's direction. This early participation signals emerging agency and grows from feeling listened to and taken seriously.

## Reciprocity strengthens as mentors adjust how they work in response.

Mentors continue to hold responsibility for structure and steadiness but adapted their approach as young people contribute more. They prepare resources linked to what mentees are navigating, adjust the pace and create space for young people to influence the work. This produces a shared way of working where the mentor set the frame and the young person shaped its use.

## Reciprocity is also visible in how the challenge is handled.

When difficulties arise, mentors help mentees slow down, make sense of what was happening and keep perspective while holding boundaries. Young people offer honesty and reflection and mentors provided steadiness and clarity.

## As work deepens, reciprocity becomes joint decision making.

During the growth stage, mentors and mentees describe working alongside one another. Mentors support the refinement of goals and helped young people consider next steps.

Mentees contribute by reflecting on progress, identifying what needed to change and choosing how to move forward. Progress came through this exchange rather than one party directing the other.

## Reciprocity shapes how transitions are navigated.

In the final stage, mentors and mentees approach endings together. Mentors affirm readiness, outline possible opportunities and step back with intention.

Young people articulate what they were taking forward and identify the next steps they wanted to pursue.

Several shared that they value knowing they could return briefly if needed which made the transition feel secure without creating dependence.

Closure becomes something shared rather than something handed down.

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This case study shows that mentoring across NDYP is carried by the quality of the relationship and the structures that support it. Rather than a linear process, the journey unfolds through connection, trust, growth, adaptation and transition, each shaped by the choices people make and the conditions around them.

What stands out across the five stages is how mentoring works when both sides share responsibility gradually, safely and with clarity about what comes next.

This work sits alongside two earlier NDYP case studies, which together build a fuller picture of what effective mentoring requires:

- [Documenting Journeys Through Mentorship](#)
- [Stories of Success](#)
- [Through our Eyes: Peer Perspectives on Mentorship](#)

Together, the three case studies show that mentoring is a form of relational infrastructure. It depends on the everyday practices mentors use, the organisational scaffolding that supports them and the systems that give mentoring room to deepen over time.

The next steps focus on translating these insights into practical guidance for organisations and the GLA. This includes strengthening the conditions that underpin trust and pacing, supporting mentors with the supervision and tools they need, and ensuring transitions are handled in ways that protect continuity without creating dependence.

These steps will help mentoring remain steady, safe and meaningful as young people move forward.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Strengthen intake processes so young people begin mentoring with clarity, agency and realistic expectations.**

Programmes should ensure that referral pathways give young people enough information to decide whether the relationship is right for them. Clear orientation reduces early uncertainty, supports stronger matches, and prevents confusion that undermines trust. Providers should invest in structured onboarding that centres the young person's priorities and creates early scope for them to shape the work.

## **Resource mentors to provide consistent, reliable relationships that support trust to take shape over time.**

Mentors need organisational backing to maintain steady pacing, communicate clearly, and hold boundaries without rigidity. This means investment in infrastructure: predictable scheduling systems, flexible in person and online meeting options, and accessible tools to support continuity when life gets chaotic. With this scaffolding in place, mentors can focus on the relational work that actually builds trust rather than firefighting logistics.

## **Equip mentors to help young people stretch safely through goal setting, skills practice and paced challenge.**

Programmes should provide practical guidance on how to turn emerging goals into manageable steps and how to use reflection to keep work grounded.

Resourcing this well strengthens a young person's ability to take ownership of next steps while keeping the relationship steady.

## **Build organisational systems that help mentors navigate pivots without carrying emotional load alone.**

When young people face stress or uncertainty, mentors need quick access to supervision, referral routes and wellbeing support so they can respond calmly and stay within role. Programmes should support mid relationship adjustments and equip mentors to slow down, reframe goals and hold boundaries confidently. With this scaffolding in place, challenge becomes part of learning rather than a point of rupture.

## **Design intentional closure processes that help young people consolidate progress and step forward with confidence.**

Endings should be structured, planned and used to reflect on learning, clarify next steps and agree whether any future contact is appropriate. Programmes must provide mentors with tools for closing relationships well, including how to affirm readiness without creating dependence. When closure is intentional, transitions strengthen autonomy and preserve the trust built across the relationship.

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- Reaching Higher
- Resources for Autism
- SayYes Mentoring
- Sister System
- St Matthews Project
- Step Now
- Streets of Growth
- Streetz Ahead

For comments, feedback or corrections please contact [The Centre for Public Impact.](#)