STORYTELLING TOOLKIT
FOR IMPACT EVALUATION
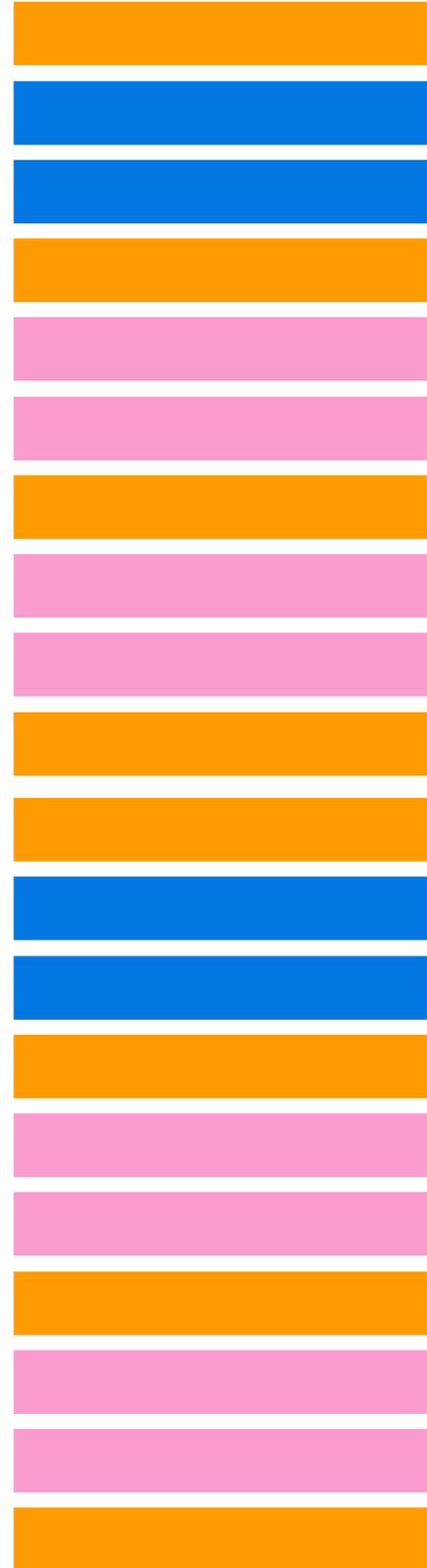
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EVALUATION THROUGH A TRANSFORMATIVE LENS

INTRODUCTION

Why we've built this toolkit

The Centre for Public Impact (CPI) partnered with the Greater London Authority's (GLA) to conduct a transformative evaluation of the New Deal for Young People (NDYP), the GLA's commitment to make sure every young Londoner has access to high-quality mentoring. Drawing on Donna Mertens' transformative evaluation paradigm, this approach sees evaluation not only as a way to measure change, but as a way to contribute to it. It looks beyond outputs and targets to understand the conditions that enable or hinder change for young people by asking:

- What's changing?
- For whom?
- Why does that matter?

These questions help us move past whether mentoring "worked" by focusing on the kinds of change taking place, who is experiencing them, and why they are significant in the realities young people face. They also help us spot where benefits aren't shared equally and how systems, like housing, education, and health, shape those outcomes. We see mentoring not just as a service to be delivered, but as a network of relationships that can spark deep, lasting shifts in how young people see themselves, in the opportunities they feel able to take up, and in the quality of support they receive from the systems around them. These systems can act as either enablers or barriers.

To guide the design of this toolkit, we've worked from a set of core assumptions drawn from the NDYP evaluation. These assumptions clarify how we see quality in mentoring and what kinds of storytelling tools will be most useful for organisations using the Mentor Quality Framework (MQF).

Our guiding assumptions

- **Stories are powerful evidence:** Experiences of trust, belonging, and agency are meaningful indicators of quality.
- **Mentoring is relational and systemic:** Quality is shaped not just by what happens in sessions, but by the wider environment young people live in.
- **Change is non-linear:** Progress may be subtle, delayed, or occur in small steps; methods must capture this without forcing it into a linear "before/after" frame.
- **The people in the stories help interpret them:** Young people, mentors, and staff should be part of understanding what the stories mean and deciding how to act on them.
- **Practicality is key:** Any storytelling method recommended here must be low-burden, adaptable, and usable alongside everyday delivery.

These assumptions guide the choice of methods, pointing toward approaches that fit the realities of organisations delivering work where stories matter. They move away from more traditional monitoring, learning and evaluation (MLE) practices by starting from lived experience, recognising change as layered and systemic, and treating organisations and participants as partners in making sense of what stories reveal.

The MQF developed by the GLA, Action for Race Equality, and Bloomberg Philanthropies, sets out shared standards for what quality mentoring looks like across London. This toolkit builds on that foundation by introducing storytelling methods that can capture how these standards are experienced in practice and shaped by wider systems.

While developed through mentoring, this toolkit's principles apply across any work where lived experience is central to understanding change. It offers a shared approach that organisations and funders can use to reflect, learn, and adapt across different programmes and systems.

The value of storytelling

Stories bring together multiple perspectives, reflecting the relationships, environments, and moments that make change possible. They also reveal how wider systems shape those experiences. For young people, these stories weave together life across home, school, work, and community – showing how different systems interact in their lives. By surfacing these connections, stories provide a natural entry point into systemic analysis, adding meaning to numbers and showing how different contexts enable or constrain success by helping to:

- Identify **systemic enablers** and constraints that shape delivery
- Demonstrate **how programmes contribute to outcomes** beyond their immediate scope
- Build **trust and accountability** between funders, delivery partners, and communities
- **Strengthen policy and funding decisions** by grounding them in lived experience

> **I wouldn't say I rejected the help of mentoring. I didn't do that with counselling either, but I feel mentoring was different because I felt there was more pressure on you to talk to someone in counselling. With my mentor, I can just have a quiet session if I'm not in the mood.**

Stories like this one can show how service design and delivery, in this case, the pressure to speak in formal therapy settings, can shape whether young people feel supported or disengaged.

Throughout our evaluation we heard how mentoring's flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs allow it to meet young people where they are, rather than where a system assumes they should be.

A transformative approach to storytelling

Storytelling puts the principles of transformative evaluation into practice. More than a data collection tool, it shifts how evidence is generated and understood. Instead of analysing people's experiences from a distance, it brings them into the process of interpretation, redistributing power and opening space for collective learning.

In practice, this means creating conditions of trust, care, and consent where people can share experiences openly and make sense of them together. When held in this way, storytelling becomes reciprocal rather than extractive, strengthening relationships and supporting change.

This approach keeps a system lens at its core, recognising that mentoring sits within wider social, educational, and policy contexts that both enable and constrain change. By capturing the nuanced, non-linear progress that traditional methods often miss, storytelling complements conventional evaluation and deepens our understanding of how change truly happens.

Taking a storytelling approach in practice

There are a variety of tools you can use to embed storytelling into your impact evaluation. However, some key indicators that you're taking a transformative approach include:

1. Creating opportunities to understand stories together

Rather than collecting stories and interpreting them elsewhere, the process ensures those who share their stories are involved in making sense of what they mean. This can happen in group reflections, peer analysis, or mentor–mentee discussions where patterns and insights are identified together. Understanding stories together shifts evaluation from "we take your story away to analyse" to "we work with your story to understand and act."

2. Valuing subjective and relational knowledge

Traditional evaluation often privileges what can be counted, reducing change to indicators and targets. Storytelling treats a young person's account of feeling seen for the first time, or a mentor noticing a shift in how a mentee holds themselves, as valid evidence in its own right. It recognises that changes in trust, connection, and belonging are often essential foundations for other kinds of progress and should be understood as evidence of impact.

3. Focusing on change and significance

Storytelling is less concerned with whether a change fits a pre-set target, and more concerned with what has changed, why it matters, and to whom. In this way, it reflects Donna Mertens' call for evaluation that attends to equity and meaning, not just measurement. The focus is on significance: a shift in perspective, a breakthrough in confidence, or a reframing of possibility.

### 4. Prioritising contribution over causation

Systemic change rarely has a single cause. In a storytelling approach, the aim is not to prove that mentoring directly caused a specific outcome, but to understand how it contributed alongside other influences such as family, peers, community, services, and policies. Here, "contribution over causation" is a guiding principle: recognising complexity, valuing multiple perspectives, and mapping how mentoring fits within a broader web of change.

5. Balancing data and dialogue

In storytelling-led evaluation, stories are not just data points. They are also a medium for dialogue between young people, mentors, organisations, and funders. Data and dialogue work together: the story as evidence, and the conversation it sparks as part of the learning.

In sum, you're likely taking a transformative approach to storytelling if you:

- [ ] Invite young people, mentors, and staff to interpret stories together
- [ ] Treat lived experience as essential evidence
- [ ] Ask not only "What happened?" but "Why does it matter, here and now?"
- [ ] Explore how mentoring is part of wider systemic shifts
- [ ] Uses stories to deepen relationships and learning
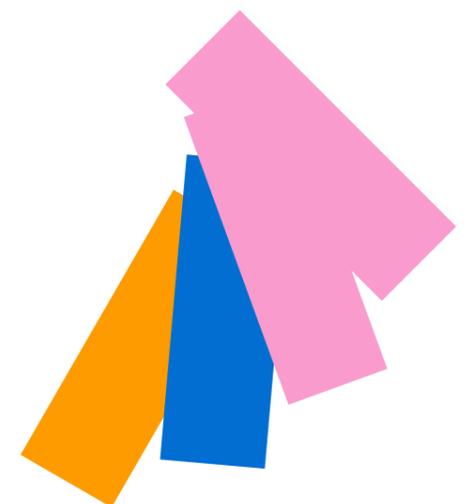
Creating the conditions for storytelling

The conditions in which we invite stories matter as much as the sharing itself. Without care, stories can be taken out of context, used in ways that don't feel right, or leave people feeling exposed rather than heard. What gives storytelling its power is the way we ensure we keep people safe, respected, and in control of their own words.

People need to know not only that they can speak openly, but that they decide how their words are used, with the freedom to revisit or change that decision whenever it no longer feels right. In practice, consent means stories stay in the hands of those who tell them.

Stories often surface difficult histories alongside moments of strength, and holding them well requires attentiveness to both. Sometimes this means making room for silence, or closing a session gently when emotions rise. Sometimes it is about noticing when a listener also needs support, so that those who hold others' stories are not left carrying the weight alone.

This is what it means to take a trauma-informed approach: to see behaviour or silence not as resistance, but as part of how people navigate past and present experiences. Safeguarding, in this sense, is not about restriction but about creating conditions where people know they will not be left unsafe by what they share.

When organisations create space to check back and honour the right to withdraw consent, they show that it is a living process, not something captured in a single form.

Care, in turn, opens the way to reciprocity. If stories are only ever taken away to be analysed or showcased elsewhere, the process risks feeling extractive. When reciprocity is present, people see their story reflected back in the way it shapes practice, deepens understanding, or helps others feel less alone. In this way, storytelling is not just about collecting accounts. It is about making sense of experiences together, in ways that respect the storyteller, build stronger connections, and help us see the impact of mentoring more clearly.
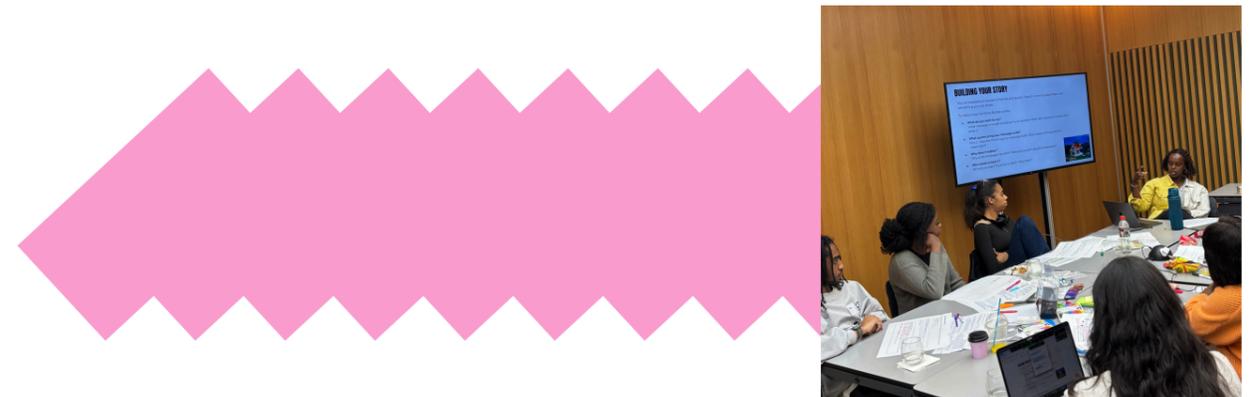
Embedding and enabling use

As a result, adopting a storytelling approach depends on a few system-level enablers:

- **Safeguarding and consent**: clear processes for confidentiality and consent when stories are recorded or shared.
- **Integration**: embedding story-based reflection within existing MQF reviews, monitoring forms, and reporting cycles rather than creating parallel systems.
- **Capacity**: access to light-touch facilitation support or peer sessions to build confidence in using the tools.
- **Visibility**: signposting through internal communications and commissioning guidance so teams know when and how to apply the toolkit.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to help organisations embed storytelling into their (MLE) practice in ways that strengthen the quality of mentoring and bring the MQF to life. You don't need to read it cover to cover. You can start where it's most useful to you:

By MQF standard: If you want to improve a specific aspect of mentoring quality, use the MQF Storytelling table to find relevant tools.

By learning goal : If you want to understand relationship dynamics, systemic enablers and barriers, or explore sustained change, the "I want to..." chart will point you to the right tools.

After deciding what you want to understand, you'll be recommended a storytelling tool that best fits your goal. You can then jump to that section to learn about it and follow step-by-step guidance on how to use it.

The tools are:

Tool #1 Journey Mapping

Tracing change over time and across systems, revealing moments of support and disruption.

Tool #2 Most Significant Change

Inviting young people, mentors, and staff to define "what matters most" and make meaning together.

Tool #3 Story Circles

Creating collective spaces for sharing and reflecting, often revealing patterns invisible in one-to-one settings.

Adapting the toolkit for different audiences

Although this toolkit was developed through mentoring practice, its principles apply across youth, education, and community contexts. Storytelling is both a reflective and strategic tool, helping practitioners, leaders, and funders understand how change feels and unfolds in real life. Used well, it creates a shared language for learning and decision-making across organisations and systems.

For professionals in education, mental health, and community services
Storytelling can be built into team reflection, service reviews, or the closing phase of a project. Journey Mapping can help professionals trace change over time to spot what enabled progress, what held it back, and how the practice has evolved. Story Circles can create spaces for reflection, helping teams integrate lived experience into planning and culture change.

For funders and commissioners
Stories reveal what quantitative data can miss including how change happens, why it matters, and what conditions make it possible. Analysed systematically and alongside validated frameworks like the MQF, they offer credible qualitative evidence that deepens understanding of impact.

For youth organisations and mentoring teams
The tools help capture the real conditions that shape quality including how relationships build, where barriers arise, and what supports make a difference. They can feed directly into programme learning, staff development, and reporting, offering credible, qualitative evidence of impact that complements routine monitoring.

CHOOSING YOUR STORYTELLING TOOL
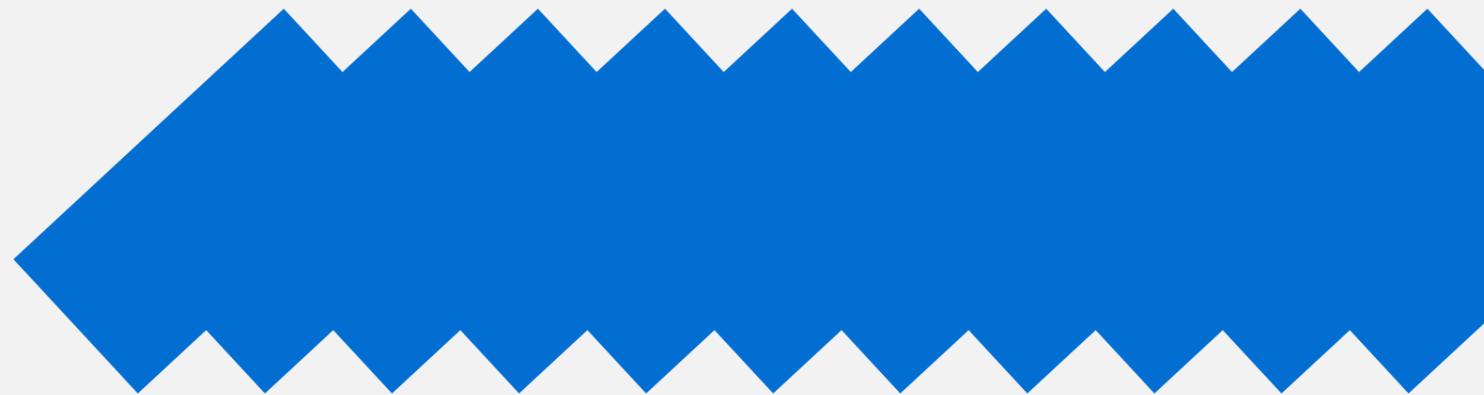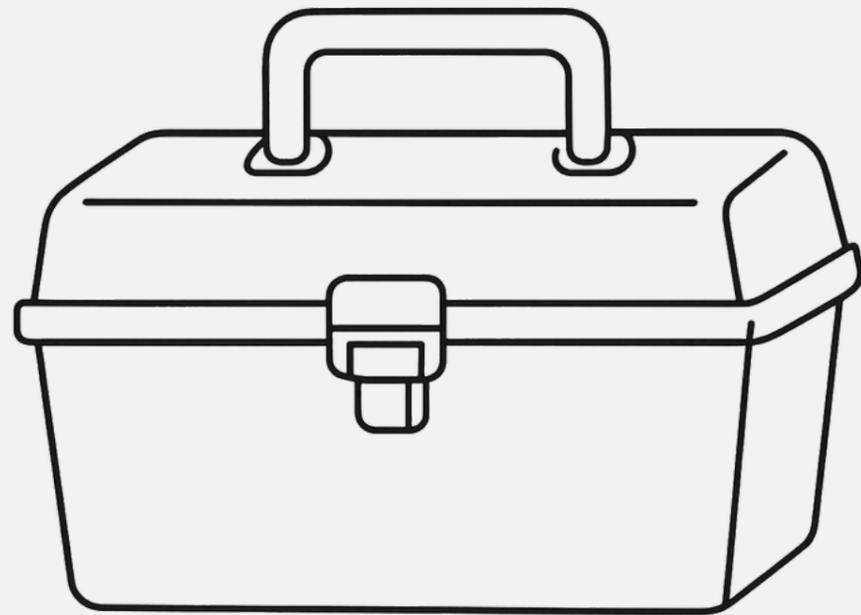
MQF STORYTELLING TABLE

This table is a guide: it shows where different storytelling tools can deepen understanding of each MQF standard, but the best choice will always depend on your purpose, context, and capacity. Many organisations will find that combining methods, or adapting them to fit their setting, works best.

MQF STANDARD	RELEVANT STORYTELLING TOOL	HOW THE TOOLKIT DEEPENS THE MQF
Standard 1: Programme Design & Development	Journey Mapping, Story Circles	Reveals whether the programme feels coherent and responsive to real-life conditions.
Standard 2: Recruitment, Selection & Screening	Journey Mapping, Story Circles	Exposes expectations, readiness, and what mentees/mentors believe makes for a good match.
Standard 3: Induction, Training & Support	Journey Mapping, Story Circles	Explores whether it is experienced as relevant, timely, and supportive in practice.
Standard 4: Matching & Relationships	Journey Mapping	Shows how trust and belonging are developed.
Standard 5: Mentoring Practice	All three (Journey Mapping, MSC, Story Circles)	Captures how flexibility, responsiveness, and consistency are experienced day-to-day.
Standard 6: Mentee's Voice	Journey Mapping, MSC	Gives mentees power to define what change mattered most and why.
Standard 7: Monitoring & Evaluation	Journey Mapping, MSC	Complements numeric indicators with systemic insight and unexpected outcomes, preventing M&E from flattening complexity.
Standard 8: Management & Leadership	Story Circles, MSC	Moves from compliance oversight to leadership that listens and acts on lived experience to shape decisions.

FINDING THE RIGHT TOOL FOR YOUR GOAL

This table is a guide: it shows where different storytelling tools can deepen understanding of each MQF standard, but the best choice will always depend on your purpose, context, and capacity. Many organisations will find that combining methods, or adapting them to fit their setting, works best.

| I WANT TO...	RECOMMENDED STORYTELLING TOOL	LINKED MQF STANDARDS
Co-design or adapt my programme with young people and mentors (e.g. using stories about induction and early sessions to check whether the programme design feels coherent, welcoming, and responsive).	• **Journey Mapping** captures lived experience across systems and over time, giving a holistic view of what's working and where change is needed. • **Story Circles** bring diverse voices together in collaborative reflection, ensuring multiple perspectives shape programme design and adaptation.	• Standard 1: Programme Design & Development • Standard 6: Mentee's Voice
Improve how we recruit and prepare mentors and mentees (e.g. exploring what mentors and young people say makes a good match, and how prepared they felt when first starting).	• **Journey Mapping** can chart the expectations, needs, and readiness of mentors and mentees before matching, helping to refine recruitment criteria. • **Story Circles** create space for shared experiences about what makes a good fit, informing preparation and selection processes.	• Standard 2: Recruitment, Selection & Screening • Standard 3: Induction, Training & Support
Strengthen training and ongoing support (e.g.capturing stories about when mentors felt supported, when they felt out of their depth, and what resources made the difference).	• **Journey Mapping** reveals skill gaps, shifting needs, and resource points over time, helping staff adapt training and support. • **Story Circles** allow mentors to learn from each other's experiences, share challenges, and exchange strategies	• Standard 3: Induction, Training & Support • Standard 5: Mentoring Practice

FINDING THE RIGHT TOOL FOR YOUR GOAL

This table is a guide: it shows where different storytelling tools can deepen understanding of each MQF standard, but the best choice will always depend on your purpose, context, and capacity. Many organisations will find that combining methods, or adapting them to fit their setting, works best.

I WANT TO...	RECOMMENDED STORYTELLING TOOL	LINKED MQF STANDARDS
Build stronger mentoring relationships (e.g. identifying key moments when trust grew, when challenges strained the relationship, and what helped repair it).	• **Journey Mapping** highlights relational turning points and patterns in trust-building. • **Story Circles** offer a safe, supportive space to discuss successes and challenges, deepening connection and shared understanding between mentors and mentees.	• Standard 4: Matching & Relationships • Standard 5: Mentoring Practice
Capture and act on mentees' voices (e.g.asking young people to define the most significant changes they've experienced in mentoring, and why those changes matter).	• **Journey Mapping** provides detailed, personal accounts of a young person's journey • **Most Significant Change** captures the single most important change in their own words – making sure their priorities shape programme decisions.	• Standard 6: Mentee's Voice • Standard 1: Programme Design & Development
Understand and show the impact of mentoring (e.g.combining numeric data with stories that explain how progress happened, or why outcomes looked different than expected).	• **Most Significant Change** surfaces the outcomes that matter most to participants, not just those that are easiest to measure. • **Journey Mapping** places those changes within a broader timeline and context, showing contribution alongside other influences.	• Standard 7: Monitoring & Evaluation • Standard 5: Mentoring Practice
Improve leadership and decision-making with lived experience (e.g.bringing mentors, young people, and staff together to share stories, so leaders hear directly what's working and what could change).	• **Story Circles** bring staff, mentors, and mentees together to reflect on organisational strengths, challenges, and systemic barriers. • **Most Significant Change** helps leaders prioritise actions based on what participants value most.	• Standard 8: Management & Leadership • Standard 7: Monitoring & Evaluation
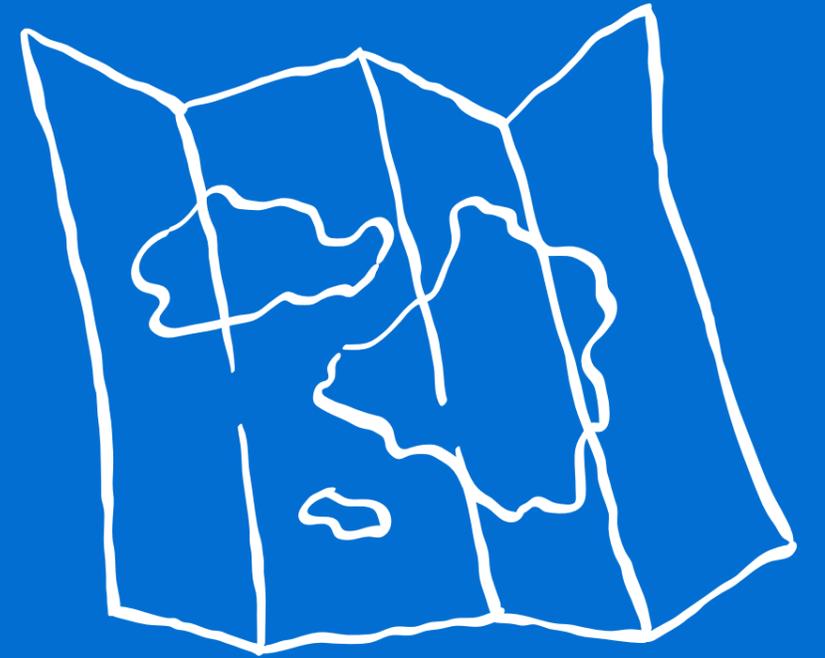
TOOL #1
JOURNEY MAPPING

Tracing change over time and across systems, revealing moments of support and disruption.

TOOL #1: JOURNEY MAPPING

What is it?

Journey mapping began in service design as a way to visualise the steps someone takes when engaging with a service, capturing their actions, interactions, and emotions to identify opportunities for improvement. It has since been adapted in education, youth work, and community research as a reflective tool that helps people trace experiences and decisions over time, revealing how events, relationships, and wider systems shape their journey. As a participatory tool it can make visible the intersections between the:

- Personal (confidence shifts, resilience, motivation)
- Relational (trust-building, communication, belonging)
- Systemic (housing instability, school transitions, access to mental health support

Why this tool for mentoring?

In mentoring relationships, change is rarely linear. A single conversation might not feel like it matters in the moment but resonate months or years later. Journey Mapping makes that trajectory visible, helping programmes understand not just whether change happened, but how it unfolded and what conditions made it possible. For young people, mapping can also be a reflective practice in its own right. Drawing or plotting a journey can give them a way to articulate experiences visually or step-by-step, which can feel less pressured than speaking in an interview or group settings.

This can be especially valuable for those who are quieter or more comfortable expressing themselves in non-verbal ways. In this sense, journey maps both generate evidence for organisations while also helping young people themselves see patterns, progress, and turning points in their own stories. It can be particularly helpful in showing how young people navigate instability and transition, experiences that cannot be reduced to a single "before and after."

For example, one mentor described working with a young person whose journey was defined not by a single turning point, but by repeated disruptions and the eventual possibility of stability:

> **Initially… there was a lot of instability. They were in a foster home, and in the last two years, they had moved at least 10 times… Once we got them settled, I was then able to do a lot more work with them.**

This story is an example of how mentor journeys evolve through a sequence of experiences, disruptions, and turning points. Journey Mapping can help make that trajectory visible, helping programmes understand not just whether change happened, but how it unfolded and what conditions made it possible.

TOOL #1: JOURNEY MAPPING

When to use it?

Journey Mapping is a versatile tool that can be used at various stages in your MLE process, including:
- **Co-design:** involve mentees in designing future sessions.
- **Learning:** encourage ongoing reflection and learning.
- **Evaluation:** track changes in confidence, relationships, or goal achievement.
- **Planning:** map out session content, milestones, or endings.

Practical use cases

- At the start of a mentoring relationship to reflect on expectations and structure sessions.
- Midway through to check progress and identify barriers.
- Near the end to reflect on outcomes and change over time.

Formats

- Individual: participants reflect and create their own journey map.
- Paired: mentor and mentee create maps separately and reflect together afterwards.
- Collective: small groups co-create a composite journey map to highlight patterns.
- In-person: use a print out of the template; sticky notes, and colourful markers.
- Online: use collaborative online tools like Miro; breakouts for discussion and sticky notes.

Resources required

- Consent forms.
- In-person mapping: flipchart paper, sticky notes, pens, coloured markers, stickers or symbols to represent emotions, tape, refreshments.
- Online mapping: a shared board (e.g. Miro, Jamboard, MURAL, Canva), clear log-in instructions, and time to test the tech.

Best fit for MQF tool

- Standard 1: Programme Design & Development.
- Standard 3: Induction, Training & Support .
- Standard 4: Matching & Relationships.
- Standard 5: Mentoring Practice.
- Standard 6: Mentee's Voice.

HOW TO DO IT (STEP BY STEP)

1 **Define your purpose, focus and format**

Use the Planning Template to clarify your focus and objectives. Identify your guiding question, whose journey you're mapping, why this perspective matters, and how what you learn will shape what you do next.

2 **Select the stages of the journey**

Use the Journey Mapping Template to choose 4–5 broad stages that will structure the map. These stages create the backbone of the journey. Use what you've defined in your Planning Template to shape these stages. Think about whose experience you're mapping, what part of that experience you want to explore, and how it unfolds over time or across key moments.

How to select your stages:
- Decide what aspect of the mentoring journey you most want to understand – e.g. how experiences unfold over time, what turning points or barriers shape them, and support that makes a difference.
- Decide if you're mapping:
  - **Whole journey:** choose stages that cover start to finish.
  - **Specific phase:** zoom in on just one part (e.g., induction, closure).
  - **Theme:** frame stages around contexts rather than time (e.g., for trust: Uncertainty → Building → Maintaining → Challenges → Breakthroughs).
- Keep stages broad and open, so participants can add, rename, or skip them as needed.
- Decide how you want to capture the journey (e.g. timeline, storyboard etc).

3 **Draft guiding questions for each stage**

Use the Journey Prompt Template to create simple, open prompts for each stage to help keep conversation focused on your guiding question. Each stage you set in Step 2 should be paired with 2–3 prompts, chosen from the core ingredients below. This keeps the map grounded and makes the link between stages and prompts clear. The language you use should reflect whose journey you're mapping.

Guiding questions

| INGREDIENT	WHAT IT HELPS YOU DO	EXAMPLE PROMPT
Events	Anchor in real moments or experiences.	What happened here?
Feelings	Surface the meaning, not just the facts.	How did it feel at this point?
Support systems	Name the relationships, resources, or conditions that made a difference.	Who or what helped?
Barriers	Reveal the obstacles, gaps, or risks.	What made it harder?
Turning points	Show when something new began, or the direction changed.	What shifted or changed?

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4 Prepare to facilitate the session

Use the **Facilitation Template** to plan your community agreement, agenda, and how participants will contribute. Your role is to create a safe, thoughtful space that values depth of reflection over the number of maps collected. Draw on your Planning, Journey Mapping, and Prompt Templates to guide structure and tone

- Your guiding question sets the focus
- Your stages shape the flow
- Your prompts anchor reflection.

What to expect in different moments

- **At the start:** Participants may focus on hopes, anxieties, or expectations. Early maps can feel speculative, encourage this, as it helps surface priorities for trust-building and structure.
- **Midway through:** Maps often reveal barriers and supports. Expect conversations to widen into broader life contexts (school, home, peers); allow this, while gently guiding focus back to the mentoring journey.
- **Near the end:** Participants often want to celebrate achievements or reflect on change. Expect mixed emotions: pride, but also uncertainty about "what's next." Make space for both.

Some participants may also find mapping abstract. Support them with drawings, icons, or emotion cards to keep it concrete.
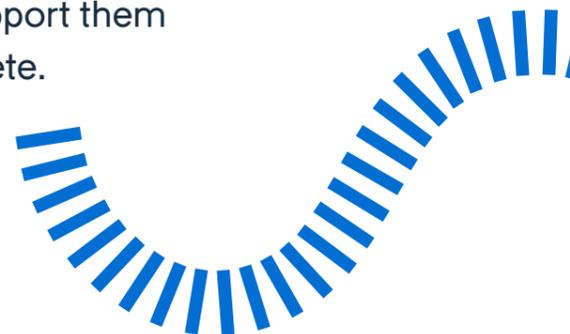
5 Map your journey

Facilitate the session by gently guiding participants through each stage, while creating space for context, reflection, and side stories. Begin with a brief warm-up (a quick reflection or group conversation) to help people ease in and share context before starting the first stage.

It is important to remind everyone that journeys don't need to be neat or linear; they can begin with a single moment, a shift, or an example. In group settings, remind participants they don't have to contribute at every stage as listening, moving notes, or asking questions are equally valid.

Where possible, have a second person capture the map (e.g. scribing or photographing) so you can stay focused on facilitation. For an example of what a completed map looks like in practice, see

NDYP Evaluation Example

MAPPING THE MENTEE JOURNEY

STAGE 1

Entry & Connection

In this initial stage, mentees shared that they joined because they are looking for direction after school, work, or life changes and want help to move forward.

STAGE 2

Building Trust

After mentees initially connect with their mentors, building trust was the next key step. Trust was built when mentors keep showing up and listening first, which builds safety. Trusting their mentor makes it easier to open up and talk about hard stuff.

STAGE 3

Growth & Stretching

After trust was built, many relationships started to focus on how to support mentees to grow and stretch. Mentees set goals for school, work, and life and practice skills like CVs, interviews, and networking.

STAGE 4

Navigating Pivots & Challenges

When challenges arise, mentors help mentees think clearly, solve problems, and access extra help. This supports mentees learn more about patience, self-control, and how to bounce back.

STAGE 5

Stepping forward & Transition

When mentorship relationships come to an end, mentees shared that they felt more independent and able to manage on their ow and know they can still reach out for help if life gets hard again.

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

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

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

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

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

6 Analyse your data

Outputs from workshops include:

- Completed maps (drawn or written), with participants' own notes or annotations showing emotions, supports, barriers, and turning points, plus any direct quotes captured during mapping. These are your raw materials.

When analysing, look across maps for things that come up again and again. You'll start to see:

Support that consistently helped (e.g., "consistent check-ins")

Barriers that kept appearing (e.g., "transport")

Turning points that often shifted things (e.g., "confidence breakthrough")

Outcomes that several people reported (e.g.,"able to open up," "applied for work")

Because stages are co-designed, you'll also notice how experiences change over time, for example, early worries giving way to later confidence. Each map shows one person's story, but placed side by side, shared themes and insights begin to emerge. To begin your analysis, you might reflect on:

- What support is showing up at this stage, and how is it helping?
- What barriers are present, and how are they affecting progress?
- What are turning points here, and what's shifting as a result?
- What outcomes are emerging here, and why do they matter?

Outputs after analysis include:

- Clustered maps showing common supports, barriers, turning points, and outcomes at each stage of the mentoring journey.
- Comparative insights that highlight differences between perspectives (e.g., mentees vs. mentors).
- Visual summaries or theme cards with short quotes, patterns, and recommended actions.

Go to Analysis Template

Linking to MLE: Journey maps show not just individual experiences, but patterns you can act on. For example, if several mentees highlight transport barriers in the early stages, that's evidence to inform partnership conversations with schools or local services (MQF Standard 1: programme design). If mentor consistency shows up as a recurring support, it signals the value of investing in supervision and training (MQF Standard 3).

When maps highlight growing confidence or new aspirations near the end, these insights connect directly to how you evidence mentee voice and outcomes (MQF Standard 6). By naming these links explicitly, maps become more than stories, they provide credible evidence for programme reviews, funder reporting, and strategy discussions.

PRACTITIONER NOTES

How many stages should I have on my map?

Journey maps can quickly become complex when capturing someone's journey in a programme, so it helps to focus on 4-5 broad stages that are co-defined with participants, rather than trying to capture every detail of someone's journey.

How should these insights shape what we do next?

Without a plan in place to surface the findings from a journey mapping process, maps risk becoming decorative rather than practical. To avoid this, ensure that practical reflections are built into throughout the journey mapping process (e.g. "What needs to change based on this new information?"), and agree how insights will be used at each stage.

What if I only map one journey?

Even if you only map one journey, you can still use these questions to trace the shape of that person's experience across stages. Pay attention to where supports, barriers, turning points, or outcomes show up in their story – this still answers your guiding inquiry and provides strong evidence in their own words.

How do I build my journey map alongside participants?

Co-designing your journey map

Co-designing the journey with participants, even briefly, makes the process more authentic and ensures the map reflects their lived experience.

There are several ways to build co-design into your process:
- Invite participants to choose the stages.
- Start with a blank slate and ask young people to define the stages themselves. It's often easiest to set the starting and end points first, then fill in the middle.
- Offer broad stages as scaffolding if a blank slate feels too open. Give something to build on while leaving space for creativity.
- Encourage adaptation: rename stages in participants' own words, add milestones that matter, or skip stages that don't fit.

Leave space for unexpected insights
- Build in time for reflection and discussion so new turning points, barriers, or emotions can emerge.
- Ask yourselves: How will we leave space for participants to adapt or add?

Why co-design?
- Increases authenticity and ownership of the journey.
- Surfaces hidden experiences, barriers, and turning points.
- May reveal how a young person's map differs from an organisational or staff perspective, offering deeper insight into what is and isn't working.

Keep it grounded
- Return to your Planning Template as you design the map to check scope and stay focused on your guiding question.
- This helps ensure that what emerges can meaningfully feed into reporting and decision-making.

TOOL #2
MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

Inviting young people, mentors, and staff to define "what matters most" and make meaning together.

TOOL #2: MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

What it is

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a participatory, story-based approach to evaluation that emerged in the 1990s through the work of Rick Davies in rural Bangladesh, later refined with Jess Dart in Australia. It was developed as a response to the limits of indicator-driven monitoring systems, which often failed to capture the kinds of outcomes that matter most to people living and working within complex programmes. At its heart, MSC invites people to share stories in response to a simple but adaptable guiding question, most often framed as:

Looking back over the last [period], what do you think was the most significant change that happened for you?

The intention behind the question is twofold: first, to focus reflection on a single moment or story that stands out above others; and second, to draw out the storyteller's own reasoning about why this change matters most to them. These stories are then reviewed, compared, and discussed to select the ones that represent the most meaningful outcomes in that context.

What makes MSC distinct is that it goes beyond story collection. Stories are discussed collectively by peers, staff, volunteers or funders who reflect on why certain changes matter most. These conversations are as valuable as the stories themselves, turning MSC into an opportunity for shared learning and challenging staff or funders assumptions around what matters most to participants.

What is a story of significance

There is no right way to tell a story of significance - the focus is on identifying a meaningful change within the story, as seen and felt by the storyteller. **As a result, the technique can be applied in many ways so long as the decision about what counts as "significant" remains centred with those who have lived experience.**

It may take the form of an MSC interview or a full process of gathering stories and convening a group to reflect and select. This adaptability means organisations can tailor MSC to their context and capacity, using it as a light-touch reflective tool or as a more structured evaluation process.

Why this tool for mentoring?

The value of MSC is clear when you consider the kinds of changes young people describe as most meaningful. One mentee reflected on how mentoring had shaped their confidence:

> **All in all, my confidence has improved. It was a big thing in my life at that time when I came to this programme. And if you compared me to when I started, it's improved a lot... and it's making me smile because it's a good thing, you know what I'm saying? I'm proud of it. It's thanks to my mentor.**

This story illustrates the kind of outcome MSC is designed to highlight: a young person choosing, in their own words, the change that mattered most and why it mattered to them.

TOOL #2: MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

AT A GLANCE

When to use it?		• **Co-design:** Reveal small but important shifts and map wider systemic impacts. • **Learning:** Surface unexpected changes, especially those not captured by other data. • **Evaluation:** Capture the most meaningful outcomes as defined by participants. • **Planning:** Use at mid-programme or closing points to reflect on what mattered most and why.
Practical use cases		• Reflecting on organisational change over time. • Understanding changes for mentors, mentees, or both. • Understand mentees' overall experience and goal achievement. • Combined with other methods (like Journey Mapping) to assess overall impact.
Formats		• Individual: storytelling interviews or reflective conversations. • Collective: groups share stories and identify the most significant change together. • In-person: calm, comfortable space, ideally seated in a circle. • Online: group conversations held on platforms like Zoom.
Resources required		• Consent forms. • In-person: A quiet room, chairs arranged in a circle and a stopwatch or timer. • Online: No slides or presentation needed, just a platform for group conversation and a facilitator to guide sharing.
Best fit for MQF tool		• Standard 1: Programme Design & Development. • Standard 5: Mentoring Practice. • Standard 6: Mentee's Voice. • Standard 7: Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning. • Standard 8: Leadership & Management.

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HOW TO DO IT (STEP BY STEP)

1 Define your purpose, focus and format

Use the Planning Template to decide what you want to learn, whose stories you will centre, and how you will collect them. Identify the types of change you want to explore (e.g., confidence, belonging, aspirations, turning points) and draft one clear guiding question, making sure participants know that what counts as "significant" is up to them.

2 Prepare to facilitate the session

Use the Facilitation Template to plan your community agreement, agenda, and contribution format. Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers: what matters most is that participants feel safe, heard, and empowered to lead the conversation.

MSC tends to work best midway through a programme (when early changes are emerging) or at the end (when participants can reflect on outcomes and longer-term shifts). It is most useful when you want to capture a range of changes, not just the biggest or most visible.

What to expect:

- **At the midway point**, stories often highlight small but meaningful shifts (confidence, attendance, connection). Be ready to affirm these as significant.
- **At the end**, stories may be more diverse, with some focus on headline achievements, while others on quieter, internal changes. Expect a wide range.

3 Collect stories of change

Depending on your format, you might collect stories through one-to-one MSC interviews or in a group setting. Whatever the approach, we recommend sharing the guiding question with participants in advance so they have time to reflect and decide what they'd like to share.

When facilitating the conversation, use the MSC Collection Template to capture each story in 3–4 sentences, in the storyteller's own words. The important part here is to focus not just on what happened, but also on why it is significant to the participant. Some participants may find it hard to decide what is meant as "most significant." Remind them that significance is personal, the story matters if it mattered to them.

- Whose story it is (name or pseudonym)
- Context & background (helpful background information)
- Description of the change (who was involved, when, how)
- Why it matters to them (their words on significance)

Make sure to thank participants for sharing their stories and read the story back to them at the end to check you've captured it accurately.

4 Select stories to carry forward

Use the **MSC Selection Template** to convene a diverse panel, review the stories, and decide which to prioritise. This panel can include peers, mentors, staff, volunteers or programme leaders. Start the session reminding the group of the purpose of this evaluation outlined in your Planning Template.

Together, work through these steps:

1.Read aloud each story exactly as written. Make sure everyone fully understands each story before moving into discussion.

2. Identify themes by linking to the areas of change in your Planning Template. You can do this by asking the group: What patterns, themes, or types of change are emerging? What resonates or surprises you?

3. Assess significance by asking "Why is this change important?" (rather than "Which is the best story?"). Keep the discussion focused on the actual change described – how it links to your learning objectives, areas of change, and guiding purpose.

4. Select stories to carry forward. Record the reasons for each choice in the **MSC Selection Template** to ensure decision-making is transparent.

5 Share back with participants

After the selection panel have come to an agreement, share the chosen stories and the reasons for choosing them with participants. It's also helpful to explain how their stories will be used (in reports, programmes design etc.) This models good practice, reinforces trust, and shows that their contributions were heard and valued.

Story selection is a highly subjective process that relies on skilled facilitation. The conversations can be lengthy and may surface important differences in how panel members interpret what is "significant."

As a facilitator, consider the following:
- As 'areas of change' and broader themes emerge,make sure to explain how they map back to the purpose and guiding question you outlined in the Planning Template. This helps the group stay grounded in why they are reviewing the stories and what learning they are hoping to take from them.
- Encourage open reflection and make time for deliberation, but bring the discussion back to your shared purpose (as outlined in the Planning Template) if it begins to drift. Gently redirect while affirming that all contributions are valued.
- Remind the group that no story is inherently "better" than another. The aim is to understand the meaning and significance of change, not to judge or rank individuals or experiences.
- Be mindful of who holds formal or informal power in the room. Invite contributions from everyone, especially those who may feel less confident speaking. Actively name and balance these dynamics where possible.

6 Analyse your findings

Outputs after workshops include:

- stories written in participants' own words, capturing what changed and why it mattered.
- If you run a selection panel, you'll also have notes on the themes discussed and the reasons for choosing particular stories.

Analysis comes from reviewing stories in response to the guiding question and exploring why certain changes feel most significant. The process is collective, with a group discussion about why one story is chosen as most significant. This surfaces values, priorities, and perspectives that might otherwise remain hidden.

When you look across stories, you start to see recurring ingredients:

Support that people described as making the biggest difference (e.g., "mentor being reliable").

Barriers that people identified as most significant in shaping their story (e.g. "lack of trust at the start").

Turning points that people highlighted as moments of real change (e.g., "deciding to stay in school," "getting a job interview").

Outcomes that people or groups valued most (e.g., "feeling safe," "greater confidence," "new opportunities").

To guide analysis, ask:

- What support is named across stories, and which do people describe as most significant?
- What barriers keep showing up, and how do they shape the story of change?
- What turning points mark a real shift, and why did they matter?
- What outcomes stand out as meaningful, and who decides what "significant" means?

Outputs after analysis include:

- Stories grouped by areas of change (confidence, belonging, aspirations, etc.).
- Panel rationale records that document why certain stories were prioritised, making decision-making transparent.
- Theme cards or synthesis notes combining stories, quotes, and actions to inform programme improvement and reporting.

Go to Analysis Template

Linking to MLE: MSC stories show which changes participants value most, and why. When a panel prioritises stories about feeling safe with a mentor, it highlights the importance of relational trust (MQF Standard 5: mentoring practice). If stories about confidence to speak up or belonging in a group consistently surface, these become evidence of outcomes that funders and boards often care about (MQF Standard 6: mentee voice).

Panel discussions also reveal what the organisation itself values, for instance, choosing a story about staying in school over one about joining a sports team may indicate how success is currently defined. Surfacing these priorities makes culture and strategy visible. By tracking how "significance" is understood across panels and over time, MSC provides a lens for both programme improvement and system-level reflection (MQF Standard 7: MEL).

PRACTITIONER NOTES

When should I use MSC?

MSC can take more time than other processes as it involves collecting stories, running group discussions, and sharing feedback. To manage this, many organisations use MSC at key points like mid-programme or close, and scale panels to what feels feasible for their organisational context.

Does one story count?

Even if you only collect one MSC story, you can still trace what the storyteller described as most significant and why it mattered. Anchoring the analysis in their own words still connects back to your guiding enquiry and can inform decisions.

Is it a standalone tool?

MSC produces rich, qualitative stories rather than standardised data, which makes it excellent for learning and communicating impact but less suited to quick comparisons. Pairing an MSC approach with light-touch quantitative indicators can help balance depth with reporting needs.

How can I manage for bias in the selection process?

Selecting stories is an inherently subjective process. As the process relies on interpretation, it inevitably carries the perspectives, values, and experiences of the people involved. The goal is not to eliminate bias but to confront it by being as transparent as possible in the process. That requires:

- Being transparent about the positionality and perspectives of those guiding the selection.
- Reflecting on who holds power or influence in the process, and what motivations or assumptions they may bring.
- Recognise that factors like confidence, language fluency, or storytelling style can unintentionally bias which stories are perceived as "strong."

When choosing your panel consider diversity in terms of lived experience, roles (e.g. young people, mentors, staff, leadership), and perspectives on what change matters. Ask yourself:

- Who is represented?
- Who is missing from the conversation?
- What balance of voices will build trust in the outcome?

When guiding the selection process, anchor decisions in your purpose: map each story back to the areas of change or evaluation questions you set in your Planning Template.

Make sure the discussion focus is on the actual change described, not how "compelling" the story sounds – strong delivery does not always mean strong impact.

Transparent documentation on the MSC Selection Template should outline the rationale behind each decision to make the process transparent and credible.

TOOL #3
STORY CIRCLES

Creating collective spaces for sharing and reflecting, often revealing patterns invisible in one-to-one settings.

TOOL #3: STORY CIRCLES

What it is

Story Circles are a participatory storytelling method rooted in oral traditions and community organising. A story circle brings a small group (usually 5–10 people) together to sit in a circle and share short personal stories in response to a common prompt. Each person speaks in turn, without interruption, and all stories are valued equally. The focus is not on analysing or judging any single story, but on listening to multiple perspectives side by side and noticing the connections, contrasts, and themes that emerge.

Story Circles were popularised by Augusto Boal in Theatre of the Oppressed (1979) as a way of giving everyone an equal voice and creating space for collective reflection. Since then, they've been widely adopted in youth, community, and intercultural work because they create inclusive, democratic spaces for shared learning.
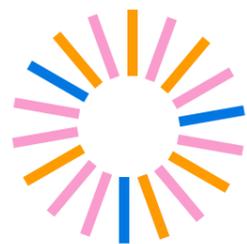
The value of story circles comes from noticing multiplicity and patterns in the themes, differences, and resonances that emerge when stories are placed together.

Unlike one-to-one interviews, which often follow the interviewer's lead, story circles use the same prompt for everyone and create a collective rhythm where all voices are heard side by side. And unlike MSC, which involves selecting one story as the "most significant," story circles treat every story as equally valuable. The insight comes not from prioritising but from noticing multiplicity and pattern the themes, differences, and resonances that emerge when stories are placed together.

In the context of mentoring, story circles can be a reflective tool that helps young people, mentors, and staff explore questions such as "What does good support look like?" or "When have you felt trust in mentoring?" By hearing many stories at once, organisations can surface shared strengths and challenges in their programmes, strengthen relationships across groups, and generate insights into how mentoring is experienced in practice.

Why this tool for mentoring?

Story Circles are especially well suited to mentoring because they extend what already makes mentoring effective. Mentoring relationships thrive on trust and belonging, and circles create the same conditions at a group level: everyone is given time to speak, every voice is heard, and experiences sit alongside each other without being judged or ranked.

They also reflect the flexibility that young people and mentors often describe as distinctive in mentoring. A circle does not demand a polished account or a "right" answer; people can share as much or as little as they want, and what emerges is a collective picture of how mentoring is felt in practice.

In these spaces, different kinds of stories naturally emerge: response stories that echo someone else's experience, counter stories that offer another view, co-told stories from people who lived through the same moment, retold stories that show permission and trust, and even mistake stories where learning comes from reflecting on what went wrong.

TOOL #3: STORY CIRCLES

AT A GLANCE: MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

When to use it?

- **Co-design:** Involve mentors, mentees and staff in shaping improvements
- **Learning:** Support peer-to-peer learning and reflection by sharing real experiences, identifying common themes, and making sense of challenges and successes together.
- **Evaluation:** Explore the impact of a programme from multiple perspectives, identifying patterns and changes isn't visible through one-to-one stories or quantitative data.
- **Planning:** Use insights from stories to inform forward planning, identify priorities, and co-create next steps with those involved.

Practical use cases

- Mentor–mentee reflection sessions (group-based).
- Peer mentor workshops and team learning.
- Understanding programme delivery from different viewpoints.

Formats

- Story circles are a collective activity, where groups reflect together in a shared space.
- In-person: a calm, comfortable space, ideally seated in a circle.
- Online: conversations held on platforms like Zoom.

Resources required

- Consent forms.
- In-person: A quiet room, chairs arranged in a circle and a stopwatch or timer.
- Online: No slides or presentation needed, just a platform for group conversation and a facilitator to guide sharing.

Best fit for MQF tool

- Standard 1: Programme Design & Development.
- Standard 3: Induction, Training & Support.
- Standard 4: Matching & Relationships.
- Standard 5: Mentoring Practice.
- Standard 6: Mentee's Voice.

HOW TO DO IT (STEP BY STEP)

1 ## Define your purpose and write a simple prompt

Use the Planning Template to clarify why you are running the circle (e.g., to hear how mentoring feels for mentees/mentors right now). State whose perspective you are inviting (mentees, mentors, or a mix). Draft one plain, personal prompt (e.g., "Tell a story about a time you felt supported in mentoring") and share it ahead of time if you wish, so people can reflect before they come.

2 ## Prepare to facilitate the session

Use the Facilitation Template to plan how the session will run and how to keep it safe and supportive. Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers, or stories: what matters most is that participants feel safe, heard, and empowered to lead the conversation. Decide on a facilitator to welcome people, explain the process, and keep time, and protect the ground rules. Plan for 5–10 people, ideally with a mix of perspectives (e.g. mentees, mentors, staff).

Story Circles are flexible. They can be used at the start of a programme (to build trust and surface expectations), midway (to reflect on how things are going), or end (to consolidate learning and celebrate achievements).

What to expect:
- Group storytelling can bring up strong emotions, allow pauses or offer a check-in if needed.
- Some participants may dominate while others hold back. Use turn-taking, talking pieces, or smaller breakouts to balance voices.
- Silence is normal and can be powerful, don't rush to fill it.
- Circles can create strong connections across roles, but power dynamics may still surface (e.g., mentors speaking before mentees). Notice this and invite quieter voices in.

3 ## Invite and prepare the space

Co-create simple rules (equal time, right to pass, no interruptions, speak from personal experience, confidentiality) and agree on a time limit (2–5 mins each) and a non-verbal time signal so everyone gets the same space.

Open by restating purpose, the prompt, and the rules; answer questions. Facilitators often go first with a short story to set tone, show length, and model vulnerability or do a short check-in to start the conversation.

4 ## Run the stories round

Invite each person to share their story, moving around the circle with equal time and no interruptions. Arrange chairs in a circle with no tables. Anyone can start. Move around the circle; each person shares or may pass (they'll get another chance at the end). No cross-talk or questions until everyone has spoken.

When everyone who wants to contribute has had a chance to do so, open up a group conversation to notice key ideas, themes, and surprises from the stories. Ask:
- What themes did we hear?
- What surprised us?
- What felt important?

Keep this reflective space consent-based, no one has to speak if they don't want to. Capture notes or keywords if useful for later analysis (optional).

5 Analyse your data

Outputs from workshops include:

- Stories shared aloud in the circle, often captured as notes, recordings, or key quotes. Group reflection adds collective themes, resonances, contrasts, or counter-stories. These reflections, not just individual stories, are your raw materials.

Analysis comes from the collective reflection that happens in the circle itself. As people share, others notice resonances, contrasts, and counter-stories. Themes are not chosen by a panel or facilitator, but drawn from what the group identifies together.

When you listen across stories, you start to see recurring ingredients:

Support that was affirmed by others in the circle (e.g., "having a safe meeting space").

Barriers that different people connected with in their own way (e.g., "not knowing how to access services").

Turning points that sparked response stories (e.g., "being trusted with responsibility," "getting recognition from a teacher or community leader").

Outcomes that the group recognised as shared (e.g., "sense of belonging," "taking on leadership roles," "building new friendships").

Because circles are collective, analysis is less about counting and more about what resonated in the room. The power is in noticing together: when someone shares a story and others nod, add their own version, or offer a counter-story, that's where themes emerge.

To guide analysis, ask:
- What support did people echo or affirm as important?
- What barriers drew shared recognition or sparked contrasting experiences?
- What turning points prompted others to share their own stories?
- What outcomes did the group agree mattered most, or came up in different voices?

Outputs after analysis include:

Resonant themes identified by the group during discussion (supports, barriers, turning points, outcomes).
Counter-stories or contrasts that reveal where experiences diverge.
Collective summaries (quotes + themes) that can be shared back with participants, staff, and funders to show how lived experience is shaping reflection.

Go to Analysis Template

Linking to MLE: Story Circles generate collective insights that show how experiences are shared or where they diverge. If mentees and mentors echo each other on the importance of safe meeting spaces, that affirms the value of investing in physical environments (MQF Standard 2: recruitment & selection, ensuring inclusive practice).

PRACTITIONER NOTES

What do I need to be aware of as a facilitator?

Sharing personal stories in a group setting can surface strong emotions; requiring trauma-informed facilitation that allows space for participants to stop and/or step away. Taking a trauma-informed approach means being mindful of the different experiences participants bring to the group, recognising that some topics may be triggering, and creating an environment where people feel seen, respected and supported. It also involves giving participants choice over what, when, and how they share, and recognising that reflection and growth happen at different paces for everyone.

Beyond MLE, what can story circles help me do?

For organisations, Story Circles are a powerful tool because they surface both common themes and diverse experiences.

For participants, they can strengthen the very qualities mentoring seeks to build – confidence, connection, and the sense of being part of something bigger than oneself. In this way, circles are not only a tool for reflection, but also a practice that reinforces the heart of quality mentoring.

How do story circles lead to action?

When circles bring out counter-stories, for example, some young people feeling supported while others describe barriers to trust, these tensions highlight areas for organisational learning (MQF Standard 8: leadership).

Because themes emerge in the moment, circles also build immediate ownership: staff and participants can act on what was named together, not six months later in a report.

Linking these group insights to programme reviews or funder reporting shows not just outcomes, but the strength of reflective practice and youth voice in action (MQF Standard 6).

Will everyone have time to share?

Dominant voices may overshadow quieter participants unless time is carefully managed. Structured turn-taking, equal time to share, or using a talking piece can all help ensure voices are heard equally.

TEMPLATE LIBRARY

T1 Planning Template

Use for all three methods.

T2 Facilitation Template

Use for all three methods.

T3 Journey Mapping Template

Use for Journey Mapping **only**.

T4 Journey Prompt Template

Use for Journey Mapping **only**.

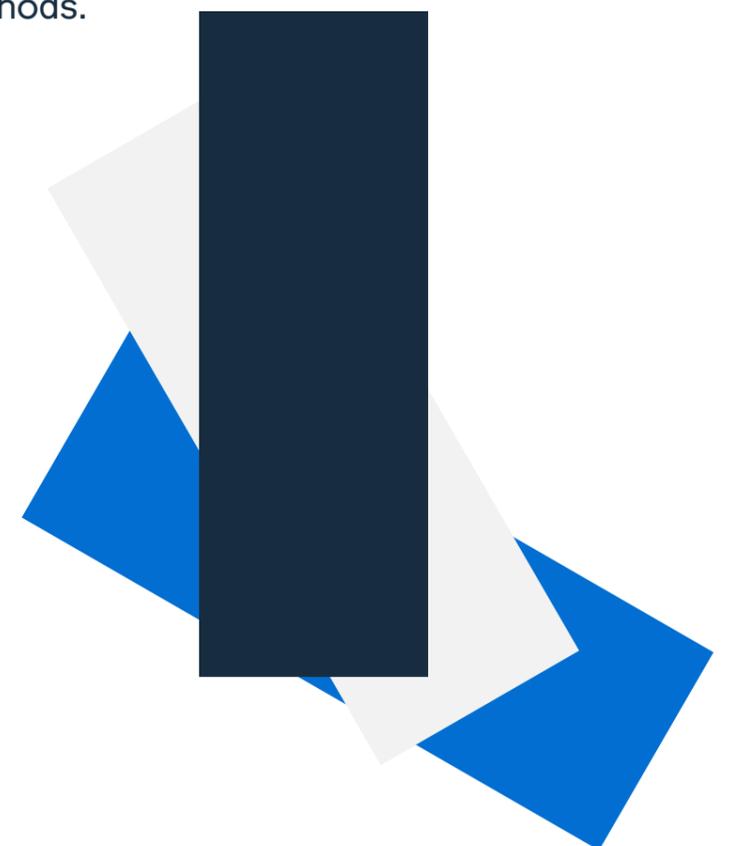**T5** MSC Story Collection Template

Use for MSC **only**.

T6 MSC Story Selection Template

Use for MSC **only**.

T7 Analysis Template

Use for all three methods.

T1: PLANNING TEMPLATE

Instructions: Use this planning template to clarify your focus and purpose before starting. It will help you define what you want to learn, identify whose perspectives matter most, and outline how the insights gathered will inform learning, improvement, and strategic alignment.

What	Who	Why	How
What do we want to understand (i.e. what's the guiding question) and which themes do we want to explore?	**Whose** voices are most important to hear? (For example: mentees, mentors, project leads, staff.)	**Why** is this important for our work and how does it help us learn about our strategy and standards?	**How** will what we learn make a difference? (e.g. key decisions, reporting, relationship building)

T2: FACILITATION TEMPLATE

Instructions: Use this facilitation template to centre the design and facilitation of your session around the participants in the room. Draw on your Planning Template (T1) to ground your responses on to explain why you are here, why their stories matter, and what the activity involves.

Participants

Who will be in the room? Consider their backgrounds, accessibility needs, and what you

Format & Materials

What format is most supportive for your participants and what do you need (materials, space, tech).

Community Agreement

Draft 3–5 simple ground rules (e.g. respect, consent, confidentiality) to share at the start and agree together.

Agenda

Common agenda items include: Welcome & ground rules; Main activity, Reflection/selection, Closing/check-out.

Scenarios

Plan how you will respond to common challenges or power dynamics in the room.

Close

Plan your check-out, invite reflections, and signpost to further support.

T3: JOURNEY MAPPING TEMPLATE

Instructions: Start with your completed Planning Template (T1). Use it to decide whose experience you're mapping, what part of that experience you want to explore, and how it unfolds over time or across key moments. Use this template to map that journey in 4–5 broad stages. These stages give enough structure to guide reflection, while leaving room for participants to describe emotions, enablers, barriers, and turning points in their own words.

	Participant's adaptation	Questions to ask at this stage
Stages (scaffolding)	Notes from your co-design conversation.	Choose 2-3 and repeat across all stages.
Stage 1: _____		
Stage 2: _____		
Stage 3: _____		
Stage 4: _____		
Stage 5: _____		

T4: JOURNEY PROMPT TEMPLATE

Instructions: Use your Planning Template and the stages from your Journey Mapping Template to choose 2–3 ingredients that will guide discussion across all stages. Each ingredient offers a different lens such as what happened, how it felt, what helped, or what changed.

Refer to Step 3 of Journey Mapping for details on each ingredient. In the 'What it helps you do' column, adapt them to your specific focus and purpose. In the final column, draft your open questions for each ingredient, these will be the guiding prompts you use at each stage of your conversation.
 conversation.

Ingredient	What it helps you do	Example prompt
Events		
Feelings		
Support systems		
Barriers		
Turning points		

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T5: MSC COLLECTION TEMPLATE

Instructions: Use this to capture each story in the storyteller's own words. As a facilitator, focus not just on what happened, but also on why it is significant to the participant. Remind participants that what is considered as "significant" is personal, the story matters if it mattered to them.

Whose Story is it?	Context & background	Description of the change	Why it matters to them
Name or pseudonym	Helpful background information	Who was involved, when, how	Their words on significance.

T6: MSC SELECTION TEMPLATE

Instructions: Use this template to convene a diverse panel, review the stories, and decide which to prioritise. Facilitators should ensure balanced, inclusive discussions that stay focused on the shared purpose and guiding questions captured in your Planning Template.

Story	Areas of change/themes	Why have we chosen it?	How will we use it?
Number or name	Patterns, themes or types of change	Rationale for selecting this story	Alignment with your broader MLE strategy

T7: ANALYSIS TEMPLATE STEP BY STEP

Instructions: This template supports you to move from raw stories and maps into insight you can act on. The aim is not to tidy or re-interpret, but to hold onto people's own words and use them to surface patterns, meaning, and decisions.

1 Set your analysis lens

- Revisit your guiding question and the decision(s) you wanted this work to inform (from Step 1).
- Write down 3–5 things you expect to hear about in the stories, based on that purpose. Examples:
- If your question was about mentor support you might expect stories about supervision, training, or peer encouragement.
- If your question was about mentee confidence you might expect moments of belonging, speaking up, or trying new things.
- Optional: Use the MQF standards listed below as inspiration. Circle any that seem connected to your enquiry.

Doing this keeps your analysis focused on the story you set out to understand, and links it (if useful) to the quality standards others may care about.

2 Clustering data

- Highlight or copy short quotes and moments in participants' exact words. Place them under the backbone categories:
  - Support
  - Barriers
  - Turning points
  - Outcomes
- Use your tool structure to organise:
  - Journey Mapping: By stage
  - MSC: By significance
  - Story Circles: By resonance, contrasts, or counter-stories

Doing this preserves voice while making long stories workable. Helps you see evidence of change in people's own words.

3 Making meaning

Review your clusters with colleagues or participants. Ask together:
- What stands out as most important?
- What surprised us?
- What feels missing or unclear?
- Why did this change feel important to the storyteller?
- How might this insight shape what happens next?

Doing this reduces single-person bias by surfacing different perspectives and ideas around what is important to focus on.

4 Connect your clusters back to your purpose

For each cluster or theme, ask:
- How does this answer our guiding question?
- What decisions does it point toward?
- Optional: Which MQF standards does it illustrate?

This is where raw stories become actionable insight. It closes the loop with Step 1 and ensures the analysis serves learning and improvement.

5 Capture & Share Back

Summarise your findings into 3–5 "theme cards" or short summaries.
Each should include:

- Theme (short, plain sentence)
- Evidence (direct quotes)
- Decision or action this informs
- Optional: MQF standard(s) it links to
- Decide how you'll share these back: with participants (to close the loop), with staff (for reflection and planning), and with funders or partners (as stories of impact).
- Optional: If helpful, frame one or two cards in MQF language to show how your work meets quality standards.

This turns themes into portable, credible artefacts. Sharing back builds trust and accountability, and helps you answer the questions your organisation or funders may have.

Theme card example

Theme:
Regular supervision gives mentors confidence and prevents burnout

Evidence:

"Regular supervision provided a sense of assurance… creating a safety net to seek help and advice when faced with challenges, reinforcing the idea that they were not alone in their work."

"Weekly group supervision offers a structured space for team members to share their caseloads, address challenges, and exchange ideas."

Decision/Action:
Protect regular group and one-to-one supervision as core practice. Adjust workloads and resources to make this sustainable.

Optional MQF Link
Standard 3 – Induction, Training & Support
Standard 5 – Mentoring Practice

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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