



Evaluation of the NIACRO Move Project: Full report

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Contents

What does the MOVE project do?	3
How does it work?	3
Who is MOVE for?	4
What did we do in this evaluation?	4
How much did the MOVE project do?	5
How well did the MOVE project do it?	11
Was anyone better off?	25
What did we learn from this evaluation?	33
Recommendations and next steps	33

Full report

This report outlines the findings of the evaluation of the MOVE mentoring project, funded by the Big Lottery. A shorter summary of key findings is available in the Executive Summary.¹

What does the MOVE project do?

NIACRO has a long history of involving volunteers. They are an integral part of the organization and bring experience, skills and diversity which strengthen and influence NIACRO's work. The MOVE project, funded by the BIG Lottery, is a one-to-one volunteer mentoring scheme which provides enhanced opportunities for young people who are at risk of offending or who are experiencing significant difficulties at home, school or in their community.

MOVE aims to support young people to become better integrated within their community and improve their well-being and confidence.

How does it work?

Eligible young people who agree to engage with MOVE are matched with a trained volunteer mentor who meets with the young person weekly for up to 12 months.

MOVE volunteers support young people by:

- Providing weekly contact
- Developing a supportive relationship and being a positive role model
- Introducing the young person to new social and recreational activities
- Encouraging them to access education, employment or training opportunities.

The one-to-one mentoring relationship focuses on achieving positive outcomes for the young person in some or all of the following areas:

- **Personal development** - developing greater personal and social skills and increasing confidence and self esteem
- **Education, Training or Employment** - supporting and motivating young people at school, accessing training and developing employability skills
- **Numeracy and Literacy skills** - promoting skills through informal one to one support
- **Community Participation** - contributing to greater integration of young people at risk within their community through involvement in social and recreational activities.

The project is free at the point of delivery. Every month a small budget is provided to the mentor/ young person to cover the costs of their activities.

MOVE is also the lead project in NIACRO's Youth Forum, Voice Box, which is open to all young people using NIACRO's services and provides the opportunity to participate group activities and discussions about key issues that are relevant to young people.

¹ Sneddon, H. (2017). *Evaluation of the NIACRO MOVE Project: Executive Summary*. Belfast: NIACRO.

Who is MOVE for?

MOVE accepts referrals from other NIACRO services for young people aged 11-18. The project also considers referrals from other external agencies – most often when the young person is:

- aged between 14 and 16 years old
- a resident of the Belfast or Southern Health and Social Care Trust
- at risk of offending or experiencing significant difficulties.

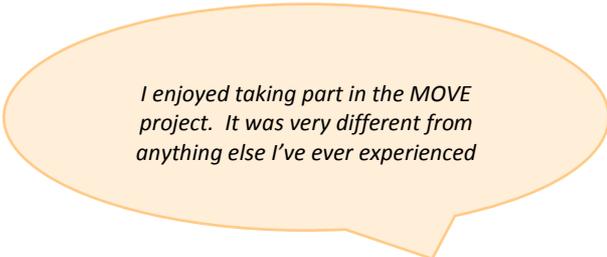
The information available on the NIACRO website to publicise the project is clear and user-friendly (<https://www.niacro.co.uk/move>). A short animation has been made to explain to young people what the project involves (<https://youtu.be/pv2EblzhXjA>).

What did we do in this evaluation?

We wanted to find out more about how the MOVE project operated and the difference it makes to young people. We did individual interviews with 8 young people (aged 13 to 18), 6 parents, 8 mentors and the NIACRO project team. The topic areas covered in the semi-structured interviews included what their expectations were of the service before they got involved, what they hoped to get out of their involvement, what the strengths and weaknesses were in various aspects of delivery, how well supported they felt, what types of activities they had participated in and what had influenced their involvement in these, what changes they had seen during and after participation in the project, whether they would recommend MOVE, and suggestions for future development of the project. We got creative by pulling groups of people together to develop a comic strip about taking part in MOVE, and this helped 8 young people and 5 mentors talk about their experiences of the project (shown in Appendix 1). We reviewed the project's paperwork – the volunteer mentor training materials, and end-of-year reports to the funder. We looked at the tools the project was already using to monitor its effectiveness, and spoke to the team about whether these captured the right areas of change for the project. We also carried out an online survey of 7 referrers based in other NIACRO services to examine their reasons for referring their clients to MOVE and perceived impact. These 7 referrers provided feedback on 17 young people that they had referred to MOVE.

From these multiple sources of information, we have drawn together themes about how well the project is working, whether it is making a difference and made suggestions for future development. Qualitative content analysis was undertaken to identify common themes. The comic strip developed in the group discussions is available separately.

Throughout this report direct quotes from participants (young people, parents and volunteer mentors) are used verbatim to illustrate the points being made. These are shown in speech bubbles. For example:



I enjoyed taking part in the MOVE project. It was very different from anything else I've ever experienced

How much did the MOVE project do?

MOVE has been operating since April 2012. An electronic database contains service information on all young people who participate in the project such as reasons for referral, demographic information and the service's routine monitoring of effectiveness using the Distance Travelled tool. Some information was available from this database relating to 55 young people around gender, age, reasons for referral, referrer and areas of support requested. The other information below was aggregated from the end-of-year reports to the Big Lottery and from the project workers.

By the end of March 2017, there had been 133 matches with young people, each of whom was paired with a volunteer mentor for one-to-one support usually for a year. Many of these young people also took part in the group activities. More than 191 young people participated in the Youth Forum Voice Box (Table 1).

Table 1: Numbers of volunteers trained and young people participating in one-to-one support or the NIACRO Youth Forum Voice Box each year²

Year	Number of volunteers trained	Number of young people mentored	Number of young people participating in the NIACRO Youth Forum Voice Box
1 (1 st April 2012-31 st March 2013)	44	17	16
2 (1 st April 2013 – 31 st March 2014)	24	31	46
3(1 st April 2014 – 31 st March 2015)	27	33	33
4 (1 st April 2015 – 31 st March 2016)	17	25	40
5 (1 st April 2016 – 31 st March 2017)	44	27	56
Total by 31st March 2017	156	133	191

Staffing

The NIACRO project team currently comprises the following staff:

- a Senior Practitioner – their role is to support and supervise staff on project. They provide a quality assurance role in terms of the project meeting financial and operational targets, and volunteers feeling supported. This is a part-time (50%) role.
- 2 Project Workers – each is responsible for promoting, recruiting, training and managing Volunteers to mentor young people. They provide direct support to Volunteers and overseeing process. They manage referrals and liaise with the young person and their parents/ carers, engage in regular reviews, and signpost when necessary. They plan and organise group activities for both volunteers and young people and provide/ resource training for volunteers
- a peer volunteer mentor – this is a recent addition to the team who works alongside all staff to assist with planning group activities in order to increase participation of young

² It is not clear from the presentation of these figures in the end-of-year reports how many of these are new participants, and how many have participated in previous years. Consequently there may be some double-counting in the totals

people in said groups within the project. They are responsible for engaging with volunteers and young people in order to give them a voice and input into further group activities and forums. The peer mentor has assisted the staff team with several youth forums and now has now been tasked to take the lead on organising the next forum. The team sees the peer mentor in the team as advantageous when delivering the forums and conducting surveys as the young people have related really well to him. During activities the Peer Mentor has engaged with those young people who find it more difficult to engage in groups, he ensures they aren't sitting alone and encourages them to join in with the activity or engage with other young people. This role has benefitted the peer mentor: it has given him the opportunity to be a positive role model and to gain experience of employment in this sector. The team have also benefited as he brings energy, enthusiasm and a different perspective on things, an understanding of where the young people may be at and why they are behaving in a certain way.

The mentoring support is provided by a volunteer for each young person who works with them on a one-to-one basis. A shortage of volunteers in Southern Trust has meant that a NIACRO project worker was matched to some young people rather than an unpaid volunteer mentor.

Some volunteers have returned to the project to mentor other young people after their initial match has finished. This is a positive indicator of how worthwhile and rewarding they find the project.

Presenting needs of young people taking part in MOVE

The young people taking part in the MOVE project vary in age, presenting needs and what they need help with. At the point of referral to MOVE, the team reports that all young people are experiencing significant difficulties in education in relation to poor attendance/ performance, displaying challenging behaviour in school/ college or assessed as NEET.

In order to show some of this complexity, one of the project workers reviewed their caseload over the last year and highlighted the following as some of the needs presented by the young people (not every young person presented with every single need, but many had multiple needs):

- **Emotional** – this includes issues with anger, victims of bullying and crime, experienced traumatic experiences, young people who self-harm and have thoughts of suicide, lack of confidence and self-esteem, young people who struggle to leave the house, who struggle to make friendships, feel isolated, with diagnosed mental health problems e.g. depression and anxiety, or who may have experienced bereavement.
- **Responsibilities** - young carers
- **Offending or anti-social behaviour** – this includes supporting young people with disclosure of convictions young people on probation or under court orders and risk-taking behaviours
- **Training, education and employment** - support with issues in school e.g. bullying and behaviours, assistance finding training or employment e.g. CVs, and support with issues with literacy and numeracy
- **Financial** – supporting young people with money management, benefits, training, education and employment
- **Health care** – supporting young people with diagnosis e.g. learning disabilities, ODD, ADHD and ASD, and providing support to young people misusing drug and alcohol

- **Information** - benefits, community participation
- **Protection** - young people on child protection register, young people in care
- **Referral** - to other support services and specialist service
- **Shelter** - homelessness, independent living, and semi-supported living.

Some information on client characteristics was also available from the NIACRO database for 55 young people. These are seen by the project team to be representative of the total client group for the project. Their demographic and referral characteristics are presented below. More than half of these young people were referred from the NIACRO CAPs project (56.4%) (Table 2) or the NIACRO EISS project (14.5%).

Table 2: Percentages of young people referred from different sources (n=55)

Source of referral	Percentage of young people referred (out of a total of 55)
NIACRO Caps	56.4
NIACRO EISS	14.5
Children's disability team	5.5
NIACRO Choose to Change	3.6
Parent	3.6
NIACRO Independent visitor	7.3
Tusla	3.6
EWO	3.6
CAMHS	1.8

Over two-thirds (68.5%) of these 55 young people were male (Figure 1). Most were aged 14 years or younger (76.4%) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Percentage of males and females referred to the MOVE project

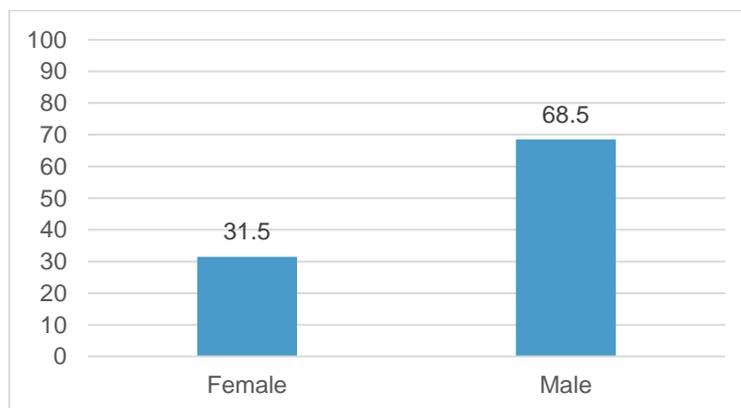
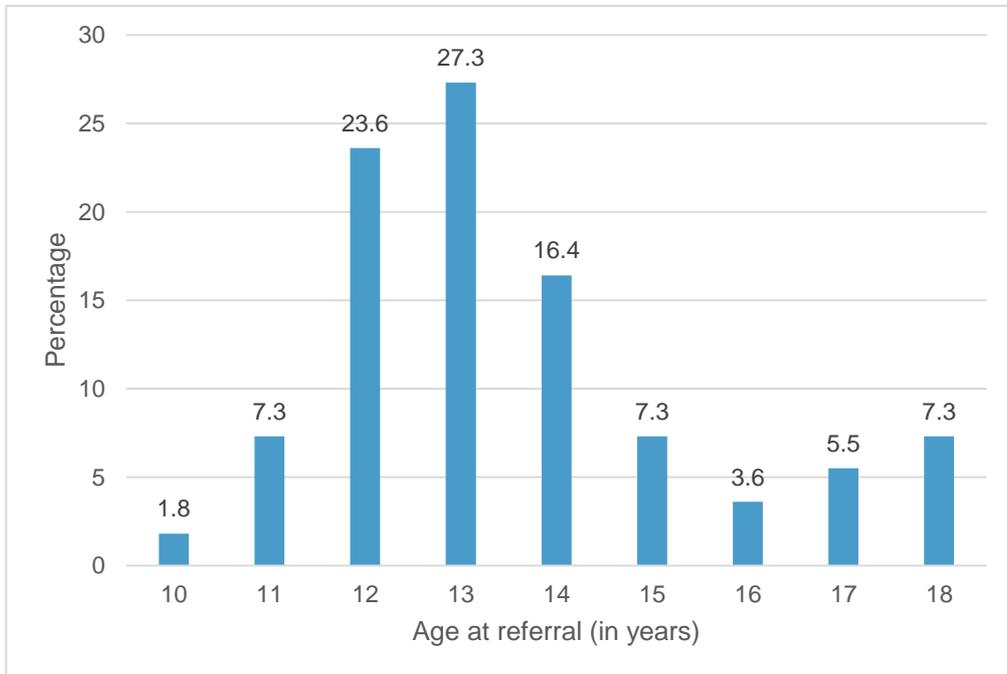
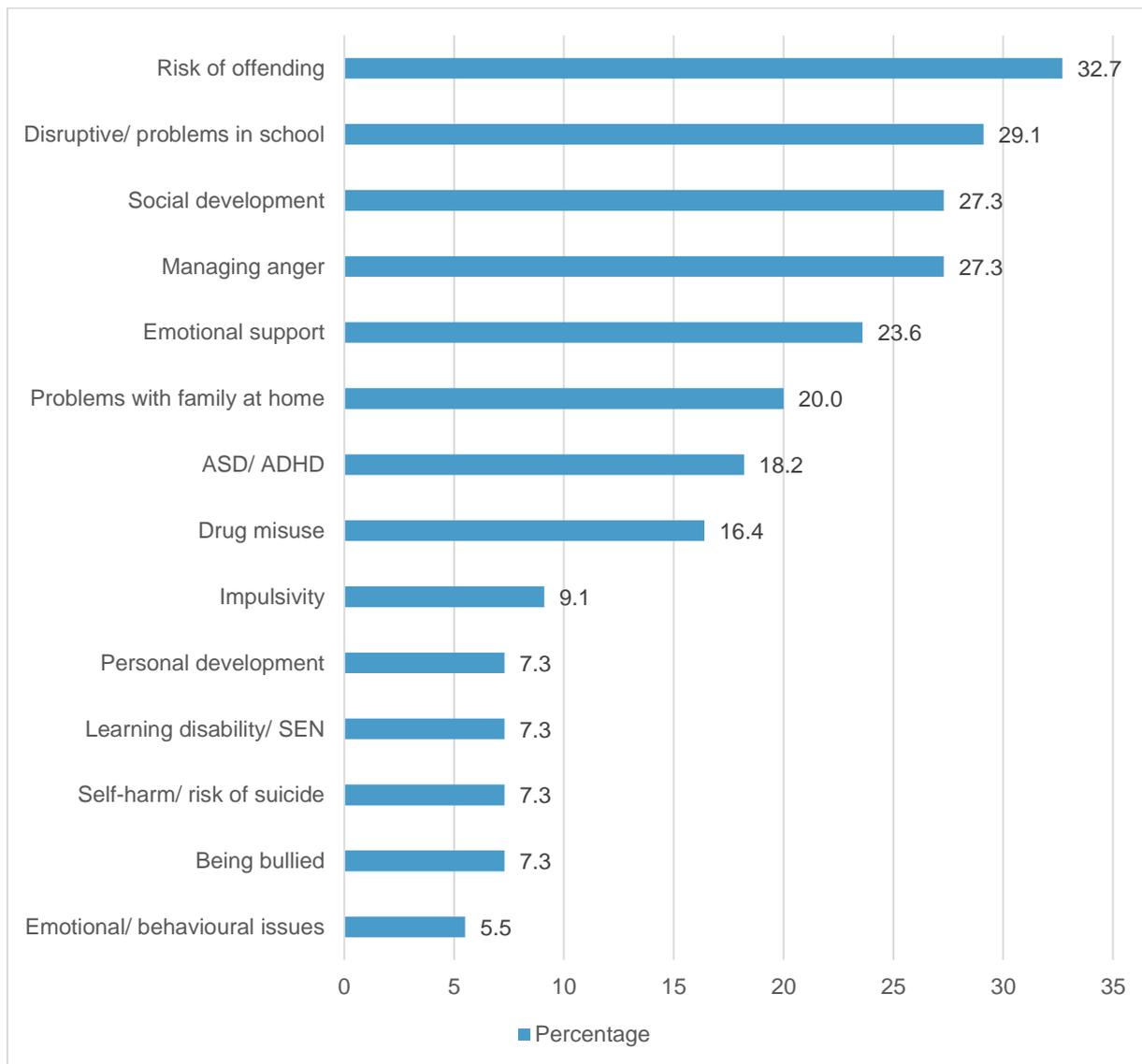


Figure 2: Age at time of referral (in years)



Young people were referred for a variety of reasons (often multiple reasons were recorded) (Figure 3). These most frequently included being at risk of offending (32.7%), being disruptive or experiencing problems in school (29.1%), anger issues (27.3%), problems with social development or friendships (27.3%), needing emotional support (23.6%) or having drug misuse issues (16.4%).

Figure 3: Main reasons for referral (multiple reasons could be recorded)



The most frequent areas of work requested for the young people were personal and social development (100%), participation in the community (60%), group work (41.8%) and education (36.1%) (Figure 4). Often multiple areas of support were requested for the young people (Table 3).

Figure 4: Areas of work requested at time of referral (multiple areas could be requested for each young person)

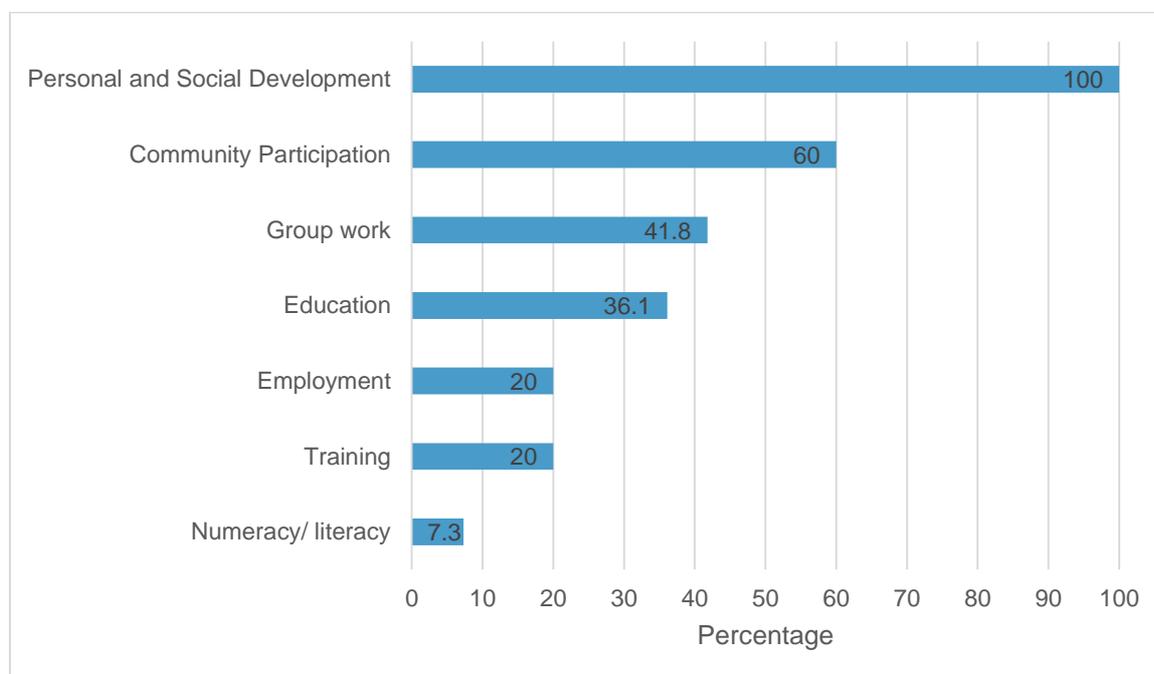


Table 3: Number of young people with multiple areas of support requested at time of referral

Number of areas of work requested at time of referral	Percentage of young people
1	18.2
2	23.6
3	30.9
4	9.1
5	18.2

Length of time between referral and first visit

MOVE has an established process for handling referrals. Once an enquiry is received on the MOVE project a letter is sent out to whoever made the enquiry. This letter explains that the young person has been placed on an enquiry waiting list and that this will be reviewed regularly. At this stage the project asks that the referrer informs the young person and their parents/ carers that an enquiry has been made with MOVE and that the young person is currently on a waiting list. Due to the nature of the matching process the project advises all referral agents to refer young people to the project at least three months before they are due to close with their service. If this is not possible, the Project Worker makes regular contact with the young person and their parents/ carers to keep them informed. Once a place on the project becomes available on MOVE and a potential mentor has been identified, the project worker contacts the person who completed an enquiry and asks them to complete a referral form. After receipt of the referral the project worker will make contact with the young person and their parents/ carers to organise an initial visit. The initial visit will be an opportunity to meet with the young person and their parent/ carers to discuss the MOVE project and the potential volunteer.

An audit by the project worker of cases open during a 12-month period (April 2016 - March 2017), showed that there were 12 enquiries in total, and the average time between referral and first visit was around 5 weeks (range 0 to 15 weeks).

Levels of engagement

Very few young people disengage early from the MOVE project. This is a very positive finding given the group of young people they are working with. An audit undertaken by the project worker of open cases during the time period from April 2016 to March 2017 showed that in the 16 open cases:

- one young person had disengaged after 3 months because he did not feel mentoring was for him
- six young people engaged for the full period of 12 months
- nine were currently still engaged.

It is worth noting that most of the referrals to MOVE are already familiar with NIACRO, either by having participated in other services, or by a family member having participated in other NIACRO services. It would be important for the team to monitor rates of engagement if the project expands to include more young people who have had no previous connection with NIACRO to ensure these high levels of engagement are maintained with people not familiar with the organisation.

How well did the MOVE project do it?

The project is now fully 'bedded-down' with robust processes for recruiting and training volunteers, matching these to young people and monitoring ongoing individual progress within the project. This is positive for future funding as there will be minimal set-up or development costs if funding can be secured to continue the work without a gap for current staff.

In this section, we describe findings around the selection of volunteers, quality of training, matching and case management, levels of engagement over time, being young-person centered, choosing activities, transitioning out of the project and what makes a good mentor.

Selection of volunteers

NIACRO has a long history of involving volunteers and they are an integral part of the organization, bringing experience, skills and diversity which strengthen and influence its work. The human resources procedures are well established and run smoothly (recruitment, selection and training). They work well from the perspective of staff, young people and mentors. The matching process of young person to volunteer is particularly effective and valued.

It has been challenging to recruit enough volunteers to the project. This may stem from it being a lengthy time commitment (meetings the young person every 1-2 weeks over 12 months) and it being an unpaid role. Difficulties in recruiting sufficient volunteers may be more of an issue in the Southern area than in the Belfast area. In some cases, NIACRO project staff have acted as mentors to the young people if suitable volunteers were not available. This has been a pragmatic solution to ensuring there are not lengthy gaps whilst young people are waiting to receive support. In the future it may be necessary to offer some payment or other incentive to attract mentors if there are low levels of interest and advertising does not generate enough interest.

Training

The MOVE volunteer Induction training has been developed specifically for MOVE volunteer mentors. It aims to develop volunteers' knowledge of coaching skills to enable them to participate in the setting of individual action plans and assist them to motivate their young people towards achieving their goals. The initial training has to be undertaken by all new mentors. The training provided to all volunteers is of high-quality and seen as effective. Volunteers find the content useful and relevant, and they enjoy the interactive style of delivery.

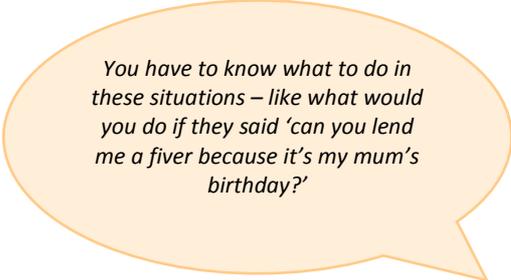


I actually learnt a lot about myself from the training – it was really good

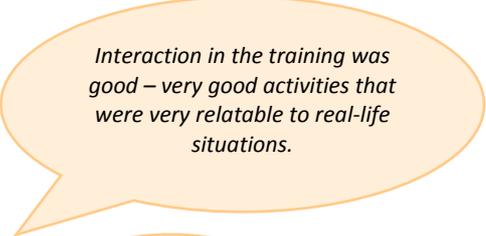


The training was far better than I was expecting – it was really good fun!

The training was seen as particularly helpful by mentors in preparing them for tricky situations and being clear on their boundaries, particularly the role-playing scenarios:



You have to know what to do in these situations – like what would you do if they said 'can you lend me a fiver because it's my mum's birthday?'



Interaction in the training was good – very good activities that were very relatable to real-life situations.



Training was superb – I've actually still got my pack and refer back to it.

The project also provides more specialized training (often accredited) as required to help volunteers with the specific needs of their individual young people. This varies according to need, but areas have included CEOP, Keeping Safe, Autism Awareness, Brief Solution Focused, and Drug and alcohol awareness. Volunteers valued the provision of this extra training and saw it as being very supportive.

Matching the young person and volunteer

The matching process involves asking the young person if they have any preferences for their volunteer mentor (such as whether they are male or female), and also trying to align the interests of the volunteer and mentor. This process was viewed extremely positively by both young people and their mentors. They saw it as instrumental in helping them to build a rapport quickly and find things in common to do or talk about.

Matching up with similar interests gives you a head-start on what to talk about right away - mentor

It was really good whenever I first met her that she actually came out to my house, to meet me and see what stuff I have. The first visit was just a sit down, talking visit which was really good cause then we got to know each other and see how many interests we both shared - young person

It's really good that they take the time to come out and ask you what type of person you want to be matched with. Like do you want someone talkative, or someone who will more just listen to you? Do you want someone that's male or female? That's far better than them just sticking you together with some odd, random person who you might not even like in the end - young person.

Remember that it can take a few visits for things to warm up and feel like you're connecting – mentor

Case management

Ongoing case management procedures in the project are strong and work well with the client group. The process is supportive throughout, with strong lines of communication and monitoring established between the young person, volunteer mentor and NIACRO project staff:

- Young people and their parents feel able to raise any queries or concerns about the project at any stage, knowing that their opinions will be taken seriously. They feel in control of what happens to them in the project: this empowerment is a considerable strength of the project and young people highlight it as different to other support they may have received in the past from other organisations
- Volunteers feel supported throughout the process and value the ongoing formal and informal contact with the NIACRO staff. They feel valued as important contributors, both to the lives of the young people they are mentoring, and also to the work of NIACRO as an organization. Volunteers found it very helpful that the NIACRO staff were easily accessible and always responded quickly to any of their queries.

Ongoing progress of both the young person and the volunteer mentor is monitored effectively to ensure progress is made, and to identify any challenges early in the process. The monitoring process is seen by both volunteers and young people to be helpful and non-intrusive. They do not find the level of paperwork and monitoring procedures off-putting or see it as a hassle to complete.

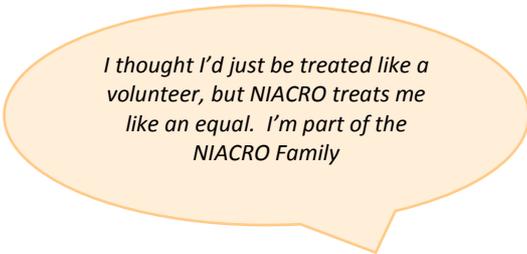
Levels of engagement over time

There are very low numbers of young people who disengage early from the project – most complete the full 12 months. A small number have this period extended for a further three months if there is a specific stressor expected at the time of transition (such as moving home or changing school). Factors influencing the high level of engagement are likely to include the young-person focused and empowering nature of the project, the frequency and regularity of the visits, the availability of the small budget which allows for a variety of activities, and the convenience of being able to collect the young person from home or meet in informal settings rather than in somewhere like a clinic. Young people really enjoy the volunteer being youthful and someone who they can identify with, share interests and have some fun together with.

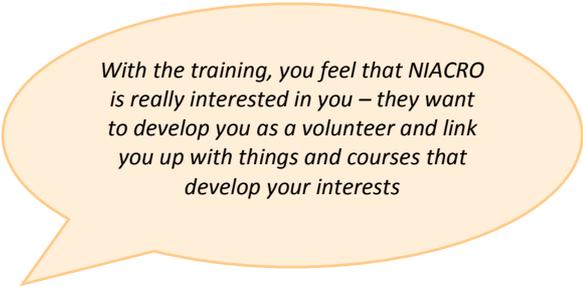
Most of the mentors who are matched with a young person remain engaged for the full 12 months. Some mentors, however, do not last the full duration. The project team reports that this is often due to changes in mentor's life circumstances such as relocating to a different area, or finding they no longer have the time to give to the project.

Working with NIACRO

NIACRO puts a lot of effort into supporting the volunteers right from the selection process, training and ongoing communications during the match. Additional training is provided as necessary and there is frequent formal and informal contact between the project workers and volunteers. This support is very much appreciated by the volunteers. Each year NIACRO also recognises volunteers and their contribution through volunteers week in June. Social events are organised throughout the year. There are also thank-you packs and awards for longer serving volunteers. Mentors valued this ongoing support:



I thought I'd just be treated like a volunteer, but NIACRO treats me like an equal. I'm part of the NIACRO Family

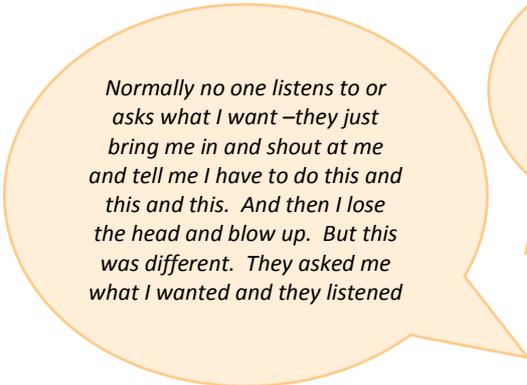


With the training, you feel that NIACRO is really interested in you – they want to develop you as a volunteer and link you up with things and courses that develop your interests

Being young-person

Many of the young people commented that they were not used to being treated or listened to in the way that the MOVE project worked with them.

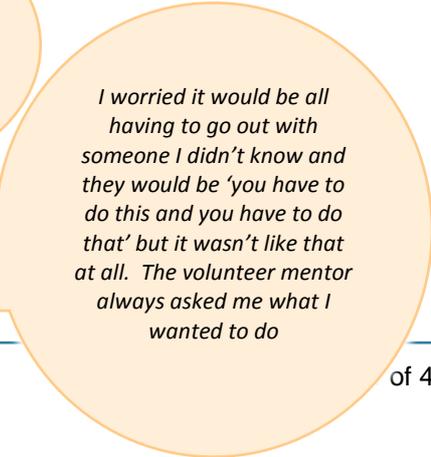
centered



Normally no one listens to or asks what I want –they just bring me in and shout at me and tell me I have to do this and this and this. And then I lose the head and blow up. But this was different. They asked me what I wanted and they listened

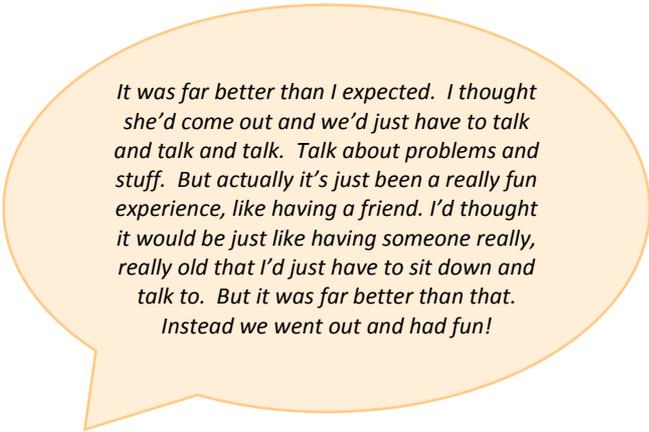


If I'm having a bad day, going out with my volunteer mentor just helps me chill out and feel better

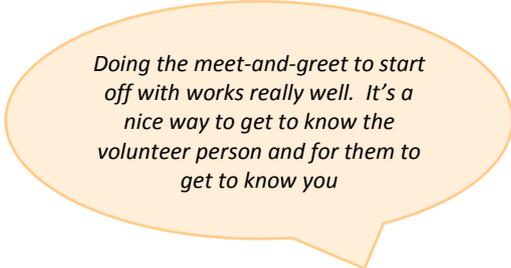


I worried it would be all having to go out with someone I didn't know and they would be 'you have to do this and you have to do that' but it wasn't like that at all. The volunteer mentor always asked me what I wanted to do

Young people remembered feeling nervous before they met the volunteer mentor for the first time. They suggested that it was helpful to start the first visits closer to home to build up your confidence and find out what you have in common:



It was far better than I expected. I thought she'd come out and we'd just have to talk and talk and talk. Talk about problems and stuff. But actually it's just been a really fun experience, like having a friend. I'd thought it would be just like having someone really, really old that I'd just have to sit down and talk to. But it was far better than that. Instead we went out and had fun!



Doing the meet-and-greet to start off with works really well. It's a nice way to get to know the volunteer person and for them to get to know you

Choosing activities

Young people and their mentors decide what activities to do and these range widely depending on their interests and what they are trying to achieve during their time with MOVE. A small budget is available each month to cover the cost of the activities, and there is flexibility how this is divided up (it can be used for one big activity in which case the others would need to be free, or divided up to cover the cost of several activities).

We only had a small budget for the activities so we worked it out together how to use it so we'd maybe use it for a paid activity one week and then do something free the next week to balance things out – mentor

There's usually like a budget for each month, so we'd plan it out. You would spend some money on this and you might save some money for the next month so you could go on something like a bigger trip. But it works out fine in the end - young person

At the start we just sat and talked about what we were both interested in, so I could get to know my mentor a bit better, and she could get to know me. We've done loads of stuff together - we tend to do things just local to me – we've done archery, gone to W5 for the bowling, the cinema, the museum, Skytrek, We are Vertigo, and we go to Starbucks a lot, just a whole mixture of things – young person

The individual activities are just one-to-one, just more talking to each other. Whereas in group activities you've got a whole wide range of people that you've never met before, and that means you make more new friends. Sometimes whenever you're a person and then there's an adult in the room, it can be awkward because you're talking to an adult, and sometimes kids find that weird. So, it's good to hang out with other kids as well and you feel you're fitting in because you're doing the same things – young person

The group activities were good because I got to meet people who were in the same position as me. I liked all the different activities we got to do. I liked the home visits with [the NIACRO project worker] as well – I liked how they did that – it was serious, but not serious – it was pleasant how they did that. You knew what to expect and exactly what would happen, but it wasn't too formal. You get to see that they're nice people – young person

We did some of the group activities and they were amazing. You were getting to meet new people. We went to the panto, and we did banana boating, mountain-biking and canoeing as well which was just great fun. It was just trying new experiences and meeting so many new people, and team-work – we got to work as a team, and it just felt amazing – young person

Young people enjoyed being able to go and do new things without having to worry about the cost.

things

At the training, mentors are provided with a list of suggested activities to give them some ideas. Mentors recalled the strategies they used:

Me and my young person drew up a bucket list of activities at the first meeting – just brainstormed out a load of stuff that we could pick from

When we were deciding what activities to do, it really helped that [my young person] had already decided what goals she wanted to work on – that way it stopped just being about treats – she had to think of why she wanted to do particular activities and not just what would be fun to do

Some of the activities had very explicit learning goals, such as coaching the young person about their driving theory. Others had more implicit goals where they included learning opportunities that the young person would benefit from, but probably not realize they were learning because they were having fun.

Here are some photographs taken at recent group activities involving volunteer mentors and young people in Greenhill and during Mental Health week:









Transitioning out of the project

Typical involvement in the project is 12 months and planning for transitioning out of the project begins several months beforehand so the young people know what is happening and can prepare for this. The process appears to work well, although the feedback from the interviews suggests it is an emotional time for young people, mentors and parents because they have grown to value the relationship that has been built over time and will miss seeing the other people. There is no sense of dependency, however, which is positive and this appears to be influenced by the preparation for the exit. Some young people and their volunteers choose to stay in touch after their time in MOVE comes to an end. This is done through mutual agreement.

Well, it was a wee bit emotional coming towards the end, but me and my mentor are still in contact. It's emotional letting go but then you're still in contact with each other, and then when you see them again, it's just amazing, that feeling – young person

At the end we made a plan, so instead of meeting every week we met every couple of weeks, and that made it easier. And I've got myself involved in other things now to keep myself occupied. I'm in a cross-community group, and I go trampolining with another group. And I've got lots of stuff to do with school with my GCSEs. So it's really busy – young person

What makes a good volunteer mentor?

It was important to the young person that the volunteer was someone that they could relate to and get on that

It can be good to have things in common, but also good if they have a different personality – that can help you learn new things

with. They liked the volunteer was often only a little older than

It's just like making a brand new friend, who just likes you for who you are. They share your interests but they're different from you as well

em.

Confidentiality and trust were seen to be very important to the young people:

Your volunteer mentor has to be someone you can talk to and trust that they'll not just run straight off to someone else and tell all your secrets

Young people said trust – usually at least 3 that this was done at the rushed or pressurized:

that it took time to build this or 4 weeks. It was also important young person's pace and they didn't feel

Everything all links into one – the one-to-ones and the group activities. Just let youngsters be youngsters – if they've anger issues or they're just timid and won't come out of themselves, do it at their pace. It's good that they don't pressure you – if you don't want to do something, you don't have to do it

I don't have many friends because of my sexuality – usually people just want to kick my head in. It was great to have someone there who accepted who I was, and we could have a joke with each other. Doing the activities really helped with that bond

Once you start, you get to know the person quite quickly – what type of person they are, what they really thought and their views – and they get to know you

Your mentor shouldn't try to force you to tell them your problems – they should be there to listen to you if you want to talk. But sometimes you can just chill out with them, relax and have fun

It was a really big thing for me to build that bond, that relationship with [the volunteer] and the [project worker]. It was really hard for me because my step-dad used to beat me and my mum. So it's really hard for me to trust anyone. [What helped was] sitting doing one-to-one, chatting, doing things together like the high-ropes course. It just took time but we got there

Mentors reflected on what they thought made a good mentor. This included having a commitment and passion for it, being consistent and reliable and recognizing the importance of the role:

You can't just breeze in and out of a young person's life

You really have to be there for these kids – if you have a meeting arrange you have to be there on time – not 5 minutes late. And not just rearrange things on a whim. These young people can't be messed about. So, once you start you have to commit to doing the whole thing for a year

Mentors reflected

that a good volunteer mentor needs to bring their own experiences, be relatable and empathise (“*Don't show pity though*”). They had to be open but also know their boundaries, both for the young person and for themselves:

It's not like talking to a friend your own age, and you have to be aware of that in how you react to some things

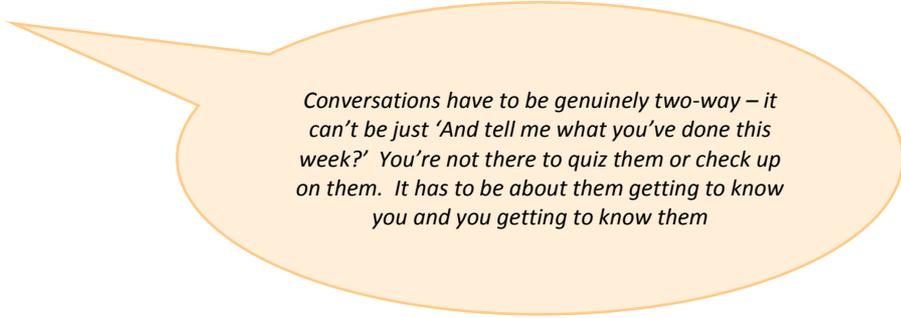
You can't be pushy – you have to take things at their pace and read their signals

You're not trying to fix them or their lives – you're trying to help them see their options more clearly and decide what they're going to do

The supportive coaching element was also an important factor in being a good mentor. Mentors highlighted how this was different to other people in the young person's life:

My young person would talk about leaving school. They'd say 'I'll be grand – I'll get £50 a week'. And I'd say, 'Ok but where will that get you? What will it be like after a few years?' You can't just go at them, you're not their mum, you're just trying to get them to think about things and consider things a bit more

It was also seen to be crucial that a genuine relationship formed between the volunteer mentor and young person:



Conversations have to be genuinely two-way – it can't be just 'And tell me what you've done this week?' You're not there to quiz them or check up on them. It has to be about them getting to know you and you getting to know them

All the mentors interviewed would recommend the process to other volunteers.

Interestingly, when young people, parents and mentors were asked about the importance of this being a volunteer (i.e. unpaid) role, it was only the mentors who thought it was a helpful indicator of their commitment to the young person (i.e. that they were spending time with the young person because they wanted to, and not being it was their paid job). Young people and parents thought it was more important that the volunteer mentor had good interpersonal skills, and was able to build a relationship with the young person, was genuinely interested in them and be fun to be with. Whether they were being paid was not a factor that they had every considered and several of them had not realized that the volunteer mentor was a volunteer.

Use of data within the project

There is scope to improve the data gathering and use of evidence within the project. Unfortunately not all of the data available in the administrative database could be analysed for this evaluation. The project has experienced difficulty in developing a self-evaluation tool which is sensitive enough to assess changes in young people's outcomes over time, and which is not overly burdensome to administer. The Distance Travelled Tool which was developed at the start of the project (and prior to our engagement as evaluators) was not sensitive enough to record meaningful changes for the young people. Following discussion with the team, we recommended switching over to use a version of the General Efficacy Scale that has been adapted for young people. It was not possible to do this.

Recently the team has begun to use the Outcomes Star and the manageability and suitability of this should be assessed over time to ensure it is appropriate for the project.

Was anyone better off?

Pen-pictures of some of the young people who were interviewed as part of this evaluation are presented below to give a sense of their lives and the difference that MOVE made. Their names have been changed to protect their confidentiality. Common themes from the qualitative interviews are then presented.

Name: Tim	Age at time of referral: 17 years	Gender: Male
Main reasons for referral: To reduce offending and re-offending		
What was the focus for the MOVE project?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Suitable training/ employment- Complete CV and obtain CSR card- Driving theory practice- Emotional support- New activities- Focus on strengths and interests		
What changed?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gained employment in chosen area- Obtained CSR card through NIACRO- Referred to specialist support- Attended health support services- Moved to live independently in own flat- Referred to and engaged on a floating support service- Completed work with youth justice and has had no further involvement- He is taking part in more positive activities. He has got more involved in the arts- Got involved more in church activities and see this as a lifelong form of support- Able to better understand his emotions and deal with these emotions e.g. anger. He feels he has matured emotionally and now feels emotionally stronger- His volunteer mentor says he now has the ability to step back and see things differently. His approach to stressful incidents has changed- Some family relationships have improved and he has an increased sense of responsibility, particularly around setting an example for siblings		

First name: Ella	Age at time of referral: 13	Gender: Female
Main reasons for referral: Personal and social development		
What was the focus for the MOVE project?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try new activities e.g. going to unfamiliar places such as the panto, We are Vertigo and Jumping clay• Group work- attend group work sessions with other young people on MOVE• Forums – become actively involved in Voice Box forum• Confidence building• Educational e.g. museum and animals• Outdoor activities- get involved in outdoor activities and sports		
What changed?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increased confidence- boosted by trying new things and stepping out of comfort zone. Recognising achievements- Enjoyed one on one time with a mentor. Gave Ella important opportunities to talk about what had been going on with her life and her feelings- Developed new hobbies – growing talents and skills e.g. visual arts- Ambitions – discussed course options and career plans- Group activities – Ella excelled in groups and encouraged and supported other young people- Very involved in Voice Box and always shared her views and experiences		

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First name: Jo **Age at time of referral:** 18 years old **Gender:** Male

Main reasons for referral:

- Support in terms of training and qualifications
- CV building
- Disclosure
- Job application and interview skills
- Social isolation and finding new interests
- Jo has ADHD and ASD

What was the focus for the MOVE project?

- College support for course - homework, revision and study support
- Careers - source training that is of interest to Jo and attend careers appoint
- Contact - regularly meet with mentor
- Activities - volunteer mentor to introduce Jo to a range out outdoor alternative activities
- Summer job - interview and disclosure support
- Public transport - learn how to get to places of interest from home via public transport
- Belfast City Centre - learn how to navigate the city centre on foot
- Improve fitness - get out more to do physical activity

What changed?

- Pursued a new hobby - Jo previously would have said he was only interested in three hobbies. He tried several new activities with his volunteer and decided climbing was something that he really enjoys. His climbing skills have improved along with his knowledge around climbing. He is proud of his progress. He previously wasn't involved in physical activity or sport
- Obtained a place on a course of interest after completing an A-Level qualification
- Attended an interview and completed a disclosure statement with the support of NIACRO. Feels more confident for his next interview
- Learned how to travel into Belfast - via public transport
- Can now make his way into the city centre on foot- feels confident in regards to the layout of the city centre. Jo is now comfortable to walk into the city centre on his own

First name: Mindy **Age at time of referral:** 13 **Gender:** Female

Main reasons for referral:

- Social skills
- Group work
- Social experiences
- Mindy was diagnosed with ASD after referral

What was the focus for the MOVE project?

- Personal and social development- volunteer acting as role model
- Revision skills- working on revision and revision skills
- Group work- improving behaviour in groups and around peers
- Spend more time outside and with animals - visiting farm and go dog walking
- Meet on a weekly basis
- Try new things- confidence building
- Keeping yourself safe (www.wethinksafe.com)

What changed?

- Very good exam results - mum and Mindy both very happy with results. She is now doing well in subject she doesn't like – this was previously a big struggle
- Improved confidence - reported by mum, young person and volunteer
- Maturity - Mindy is responding more appropriately
- More awareness of dangers
- Will discuss things more openly than previously

First name: Sonia **Age at time of referral:** 12 **Gender:** Female

Main reasons for referral:

- Personal/ social development

What was the focus for the MOVE project?

- Confidence building - meeting new people and being in new situations
- Someone for Sonia to talk with one on one
- Emotional support
- Development of interests e.g. art skills
- Educational – visiting places of interest e.g. Ulster Museum
- Try new things and new experiences

What changed?

- Maturity – mum and volunteer report that Sonia has matured throughout her time on MOVE
- Confidence – Sonia stated that she feels more confident talking with new people and in groups
- Development of interests and skills - very talented art student who is developing her skills in various areas
- Able to confide in volunteer about her worries, how things are going at home and at school
- Continuously very good exam results
- Training and career plan developed

Overall the MOVE project is seen as helpful by those who are taking part in it. Qualitative information from the interviews consistently highlighted positive changes for young people in terms of improving their self-confidence, social skills, personal organization and willingness to try things they would not have done previously. Common themes from the interviews are summarized below from the perspectives of the young people, parents and volunteer mentors.

Young people's perspectives

Young people reflected that the MOVE project had made a huge difference to them and had given them many opportunities to try things that they would otherwise never have done. They felt more confident, more mature, found it easier to speak to other people and manage their emotions. Some had learnt new skills and valued the support of the volunteer mentor in helping them to do this, such as learning how to drive. Many said it had improved their personal organization and they had learnt about budgeting when choosing what activities to do. They had become more assertive and their increased-self-confidence helped them to interact with their friends and families in more positive ways, rather than being frustrated and sometimes just lashing out. One of the strongest and most consistent themes in the interviews was how important it was to the young person to have someone there just for them, and them recognizing the feeling that they were valued. They built up trust in the volunteer mentor and many referred to them as being like an older friend. This emotional and practical support appears to have helped them continue to draw on similar support from other people and use their social networks in more positive ways. During the interviews and comic strip groups the young people were confident, articulate and often funny. They were able to easily reflect on their experiences on the project, and many described it as the best thing to have ever happened to them.

The biggest difference to me was getting me out of the house. Otherwise I'd just be playing computer games all the time and vegging in the bed

I really like that NIACRO asked me what I wanted from the volunteer mentor – made me feel like they were interested in me. And I like that my volunteer mentor keeps in touch with me in between the visits – I matter enough to her for her to do that. That means a lot

In school I'm not that confident, I can't talk to people in crowds. But when it's just us I can talk and wind down

I was a different person back then at the start. The first time I met [my volunteer] I was so awkward. I didn't know what was going to happen. Then I just started getting more out of myself and changing a lot more. I'm a lot happier now. If I'd known back then I was going to make friends with this complete stranger, it would have been easier

We went to different places I'd never been before, like different restaurants and fun activities like sports and art. It wasn't like sitting in a room feeling awkward, you could feel like yourself. You just felt more out there and more open

It's definitely made me a more confident person around other people because I've been able to talk to other people more, and now I'm better at listening to what other people say as well. I've got to know other people that I wouldn't have necessarily known if it hadn't been for this project. And I wouldn't have got those free breaks from the house. You know, everyone needs a free break from the house

My mum says I'm a totally different person now compared to what I was before. She loves the new me, honestly

This has made a massive difference. Ever since I've been on this project, I've not been arrested. I've not had any bother with the cops. I'm keeping myself occupied. I'm not drinking any more – before I came on this I was drinking quite heavily every day of the week. I've cut down the cigarettes as well. It's all down to this project and the bond I've got with [the volunteer mentor] and [the NIACRO project worker]

I'm less angry. Before this, if you'd said 'boo' to me in the street, your head would have been in the tarmac. I was that mad and wound up. This has helped me to open up – sitting and talking or going out to take your mind off things. ... Building the bond is what's made this work. I built a bond with them and was then open to them. If I've any problems I'll say, I'll ring [the volunteer or NIACRO project worker] and talk about what's bugging me, and they'll try to help me

young
highly

All the
people would
recommend the MOVE project to others:

I'd say, just go for it. It's not just that you get out of the house – you get to talk to somebody, you get a friend you can share your problems with

I'd definitely recommend it. I was a totally different person at the start of this process. I thought at the start I wasn't going to like this at all because I wouldn't be able to talk, but I've just ended up opening up and getting everything out and just changing into a whole new person. It honestly has just changed me a lot

You'll get a lot out of it. Making a new friend of a stranger, the mentor, and just opening up and getting to be out and about instead of being cramped in a room, and getting to be free, getting to go places that you want to go to

Don't be nervous. You're going to become this whole new person and you'll love it. Just go for it!

Parents' perspectives

Parents reported many changes in their sons and daughters. Before beginning the project, they were often very concerned about how well their young person was. Parents described young people who had withdrawn into themselves and lost interest in things, and who were struggling in a number of areas of their lives including socially and academically. Many parents were surprised how quickly their young person 'clicked' with the mentor. Initial changes observed included the young person starting to look forward to the volunteer coming, and being happier. Over time, the young people became more outgoing and in some cases improved communication within the family. Parents were often also reassured that the young person spent time with their mentor - they didn't have to be worried about what their son or daughter were up to. The time spent in the MOVE project was seen as a safe space with someone who the parent trusted and this offered some relief to the parent.

Parents were often also reassured that the young person spent time with their mentor - they didn't have to be worried about what their son or daughter were up to. The time spent in the MOVE project was seen as a safe space with someone who the parent trusted and this offered some relief to the parent.

Any child with autism like my daughter is very isolated. No one wants to be alone and everyone needs at least one friend. They don't need another mum or family member – they need a friend. Someone who understands what autism is all about. If it wasn't for MOVE she'd still be stuck at home by herself. If she can go away for one or two hours a week and have some fun, I feel like I'm not letting her down. You can't pay for that, it's hugely important – it's a life-lasting experience

The whole idea of having someone close in age to mentor them – that's a brilliant idea. My daughter is really enjoying it. She looks forward to it every week and [the volunteer mentor] never lets her down. She'd been bullied and was really withdrawn and was getting lost in our family with everything else that's happening at home. But within a few months there was an amazing difference – she's opening up now which she wasn't before. Even after the first week she was smiling. It's been a lifeline for her

On the day my son is going out with his mentor, he's in a good mood. He loves it. He's always asking when she's coming back

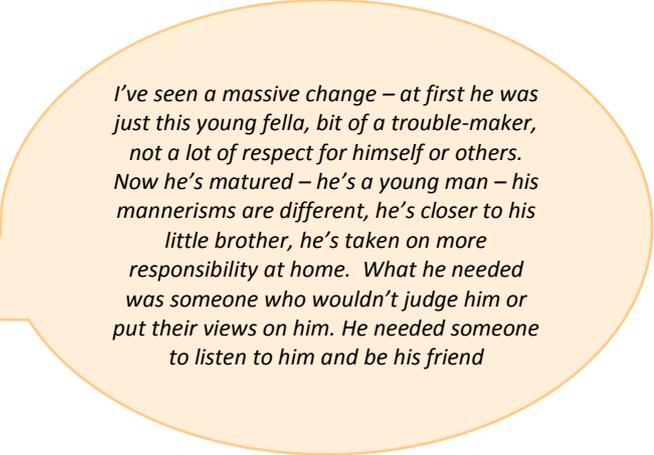
Mentors' perspectives

Mentors described seeing their young person 'coming out of their shell' and becoming more emotionally mature. They discussed how they could see some of the strategies they were using to encourage their mentee starting to work, and the young person becoming more confident. At the start, the volunteer mentor often suggested things to do, but soon the young person started to come up with their ideas and become more confident about expressing them. They also reported that the young people started to get involved with other friends and in other activities which was seen as beneficial particularly coming towards the end of their time with the project.

He trusts me to help him because he feels I'm in a good position. He's been let down by other people who he felt weren't able to help him. The MOVE project is really good for encouraging vulnerable teenagers – it's a good age to engage them and steer them away from trouble. They're not really old enough to go out, so they end up knocking about in communities because they've got nothing else to do. Move helps them get independence to go do things. It gives them goals and challenges them. Keeps them out of trouble

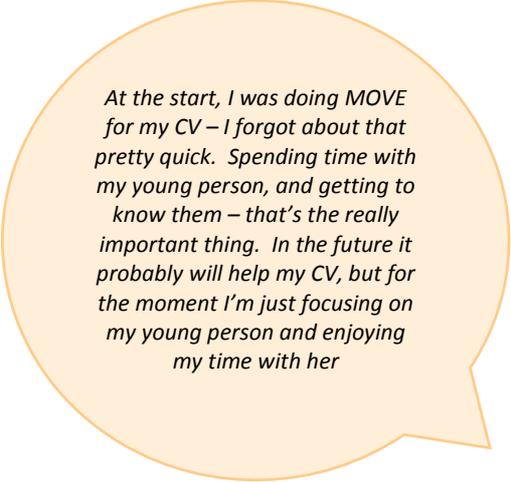
Anything else in my young person's life is very formal so this needs to be more relaxed. MOVE is different – it's at their pace, not the services

The biggest thing for me in terms of a change is I have a real feeling of satisfaction when I look at how much [she] has come on and how confident she is now. And I know that I played a part in that. It makes me very happy and proud of her

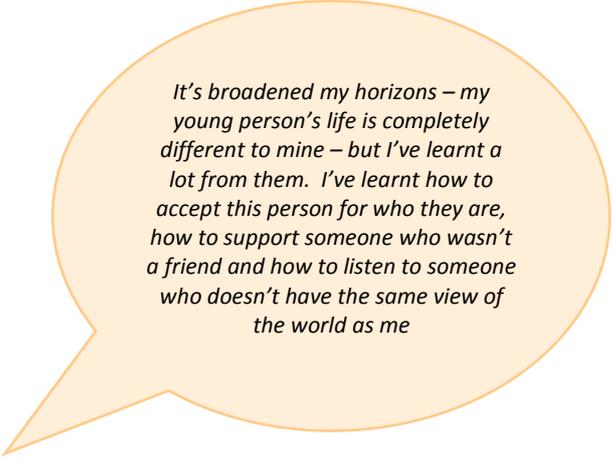


I've seen a massive change – at first he was just this young fella, bit of a trouble-maker, not a lot of respect for himself or others. Now he's matured – he's a young man – his mannerisms are different, he's closer to his little brother, he's taken on more responsibility at home. What he needed was someone who wouldn't judge him or put their views on him. He needed someone to listen to him and be his friend

Mentors also described changes in themselves as a result of volunteering with MOVE. Several had begun the project because they needed to get experience for their education or work. They felt they had learnt a lot and developed new skills around understanding other people's perspectives, interpersonal skills and personal organization. Many said they wanted to continue in a similar role because they had found it so rewarding to see the impact on a young person's life.



At the start, I was doing MOVE for my CV – I forgot about that pretty quick. Spending time with my young person, and getting to know them – that's the really important thing. In the future it probably will help my CV, but for the moment I'm just focusing on my young person and enjoying my time with her



It's broadened my horizons – my young person's life is completely different to mine – but I've learnt a lot from them. I've learnt how to accept this person for who they are, how to support someone who wasn't a friend and how to listen to someone who doesn't have the same view of the world as me

Referrers

Referrers from other services within NIACRO saw the project as a valuable support that they could refer young people transitioning out of their services onto. They were confident in the quality of the service and content with the level of feedback they received about ongoing

progress. They saw it as the one-to-one mentoring as providing a positive role model for young people, giving opportunities for young people to talk in a safe environment, develop skills and take part in activities which provide new opportunities and experience positive social interactions. They saw the youth forum element of the project as helping young people from throughout NIACRO to get involved and develop in confidence.

Caveats

It is not possible from this type of retrospective qualitative evaluation to say how long these positive effects will persist for, or indeed whether they would have happened anyway. Given that so many of the young people had previously taken part in other services, there is a possibility that some of the positive improvements are a carry-over from that previous work done by NIACRO. The feedback from parents and young people suggests that MOVE has made its own unique contribution. All those interviewed stated that the situation would have been a lot more negative for the young person had they not taken part in the MOVE project, and things would have been unlikely to change by themselves without this input. Many of the interviews happened several months after the young people had completed the project, and the positive effects they were highlighting were still present at that stage.

What did we learn from this evaluation?

The MOVE project provides useful support that is highly valued by young people and their families. The project can successfully engage vulnerable young people who might otherwise find it difficult to get and use support.

Key factors contributing to MOVE's success include:

- **good project management** (including selection and training of mentors, supervision and support, and monitoring of young people's progress)
- **good lines of communication** – young people, parents and mentors all appreciate the ongoing contact with the NIACRO staff during the year to check everything is going to plan
- **the matching process of young person and volunteer mentor** - this involves asking young people about any preferences they have for their volunteer mentor and trying to align interests when possible
- **interpersonal skills** – the NIACRO staff and mentors are able to engage young people and families in respectful, non-judgmental ways, whilst still retaining boundaries around acceptable behaviour
- **use of a mentoring approach that involves goal-setting, modelling, training in specific skills, opportunities to practice these, monitoring progress and providing coaching feedback** – this social-learning approach has structured elements, but is delivered in an informal, encouraging and empowering way for the young person. The young person is firmly at the centre and is encouraged to take ownership of what they do
- **the frequency and regularity of visits** – meeting every 1-2 weeks over the course of a year. There is an emphasis on predictability, so volunteer mentors are encouraged not to change visits last-minute or without good reason
- **the informal, yet professional, style of delivery** – having the volunteer come to the house and being able to meet the young person in informal places is seen as beneficial to engagement
- **the mix of one-to-one contact and a small number of group activities** – both these elements are seen as useful as they offer flexibility to the young person and provide different opportunities for them to choose to participate in depending on their interests and needs
- **provision of the small monthly budget** – this facilitates young people being able to choose activities they enjoy and learn how to budget for these.

Recommendations and next steps

All elements of the project are seen as necessary as noted in the previous section under key factors. Going forward the service should try to maintain all of the key elements showing on the next page if possible.



Mentoring involving goal-setting, modelling, training in specific skills, opportunities to practice these, monitoring process and coaching feedback



Good communication



Matching process of young person and volunteer mentor



Provision of small monthly budget

Interpersonal skills

Mix of one-to-one and group activities

Informal, yet professional, style of delivery

Good project management

Regularity and frequency of visits



Most of the referrals to MOVE are already familiar with NIACRO, either by having participated in other services, or by a family member having participated in other NIACRO services. It would be important for the team to monitor rates of engagement if the project expands to include more young people who have had no previous connection with NIACRO. Young people coming fresh to NIACRO may need additional support to engage with the project.

The combination of paid NIACRO staff and unpaid volunteers has been fairly effective in this model, but it is not without its challenges. Recruiting enough volunteers has sometimes been tricky. This may reflect the time commitment that is required in this hybrid model of volunteer and paid staff. It is positive that NIACRO has put in place effective supports to attract quality mentors and provide them the right skills to support these young people. It is important to note, however, that NIACRO's input does not end with a family when the volunteer mentor starts their work. The paid NIACRO staff continue to have a lot of contact with the families during the year, particularly during the initial assessment and review processes, as well as ongoing informal contact. The project worker also has a lot of contact with volunteers to ensure monitor progress and ensure everything is going ok. This ongoing support and contact with the NIACRO paid staff is highly valued by young people, parents and volunteers, and it appears to be a key element in making the project successful. Nevertheless, it takes up project worker time and has the risk of being a hidden cost in projects such as these. Volunteer mentors does not equate to 'free' mentors – although the volunteers do not get paid, there is still project resource tied up in supporting them to do the work effectively. NIACRO has developed a good model of supporting unpaid volunteers, and going forward this needs to be sufficiently resourced. In areas where there is difficulty recruiting volunteers, it may be useful to examine whether it would be more cost-effective to deliver the support to the young people using mentors who receive some form of remuneration or payment to incentivize them to get involved in the project. The feedback from the young people and parents suggests that they are not influenced by whether the mentor is paid or not, but are more interested in how well they can provide the support and how easy the young person finds it to engage with them.

The data gathering and analysis of the self-monitoring data needs to be strengthened going forward. The Distance Travelled Tool does not appear to be sensitive enough for measuring outcomes, and its use should only continue if the project team find it helpful for individual case-management. It would be useful to analyse the Outcome Stars measurement data pre- and post-engagement in the project when sufficient data is available from it, to see if this standardized tool supports the qualitative data presented here. Follow-up measures could then also be undertaken six months after finishing with the project to see if effects persist over time. During our initial discussions with the team in 2015, we had suggested using an adapted version of the General Efficacy Scale: this would provide a useful alternative if the Outcome Stars do not meet the project requirements. It would also be useful to collect comparative data for young people who have not received support from the project to see if any improvements would have happened anyway. An alternative to this separate control group would be to undertake a waiting-list measurement with young people if there is a delay between the time of referral and actually engaging with the service.

In summary, we recommend that:

- the key elements of the project as it is currently being implemented should be maintained in future service delivery
- further funding should be sought for this project as the findings from the evaluation are promising. The service is well established. There would be no set-up period for a new funder if resources could be secured without a gap from the current funding, as it would allow existing staff could remain in post and continue delivery seamlessly
- It would require little adaptation to the model to continue delivery to the existing client group of young people referred from other NIACRO services
- the model could scale-up and expand into other areas beyond the Belfast and Southern Trusts if sufficient numbers of volunteer mentors can be recruited. If insufficient volunteers can be recruited, payment should be considered
- other client groups of young people should also be considered, beyond those already involved in NIACRO services. These could include young people at risk of expulsion from school, or on the edges of care or the juvenile justice system. The project may wish to look at the learning from the Early Intervention Transformation programme Edges in this regard. Another client group that might benefit from this model is young people with mild learning disabilities or behavioural problems (such as ASD) whose families require respite. These young people are vulnerable for different reasons than those who have participated in the project to date (they are not at risk of offending); but they would likely benefit from the self-empowerment and personal development aspects of the approach in similar ways to current MOVE participants. Additional training may be required for volunteer mentors to work with this group, or consideration may need to be given to using paid workers for these families.

Appendix 1a: Comic strip developed by the mentors for future mentors considering volunteering with NIACRO mentoring services

So you're interested in becoming a MENTOR..?

The NIACRO mentoring programme partners young people with adult mentors...



So how does the mentoring process work?

It begins with an informal interview with NIACRO...

Then there's the training programme...

It's not boring - there's lots of activities...

You learn a lot about yourself, and there are opportunities for training on different issues...

BRITISH AWARENESS

There may be a period of waiting for the phone to ring...

CALL!

This is because the mentor process is young-person led...

But one day that call will come...

NIACRO want to find the right fit.

IT'S TIME...

The NIACRO worker will brief you before you meet the young person...

THE FIRST MEETING WILL HAPPEN WHERE THE YOUNG PERSON LIVES...

NIACRO will be there and will introduce you...

The young person will probably be shy or nervous...

...So don't worry too much about "saying or doing the wrong thing..."

You're NOT going in to "fix" them!

Hi!

Um... hi...

...You may be nervous too - that's okay

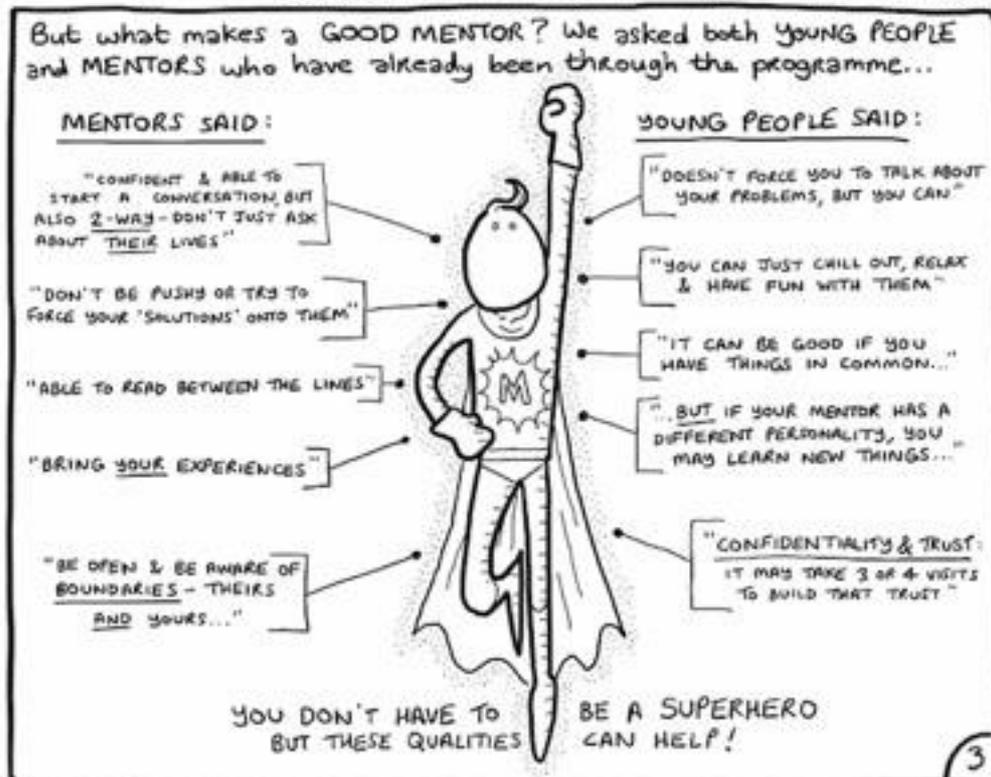
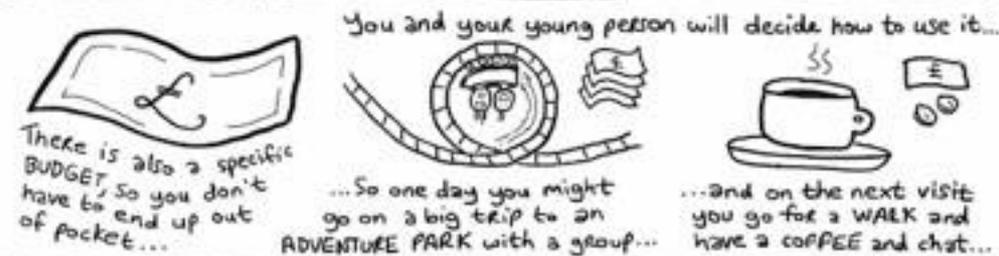
This young person will have goals they want to achieve over the next year...

These could be specific - like passing exams...

OR general, like being able to talk to people...

REMEMBER: THE NIACRO STAFF WILL BE SUPPORTING YOU THROUGHOUT THE MENTOR PROGRAMME... You can call on them anytime for more support...

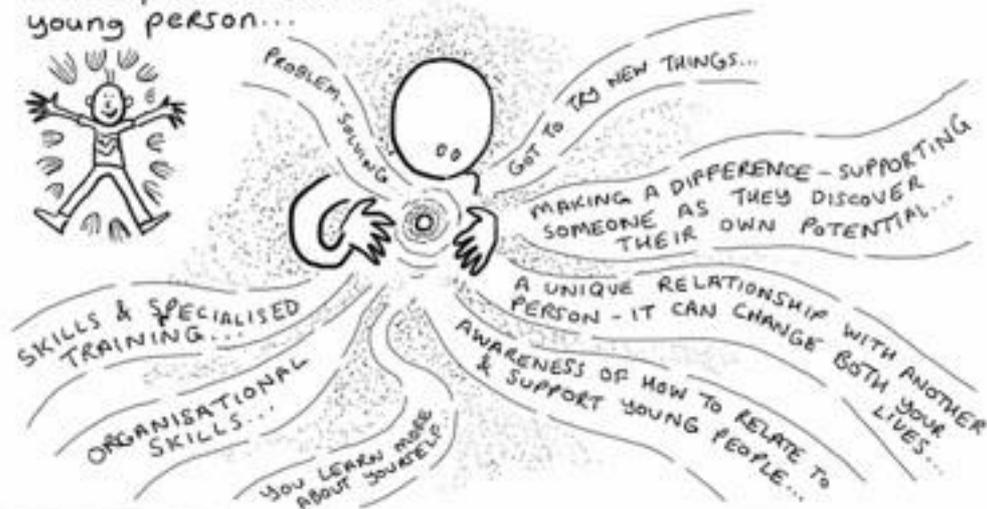






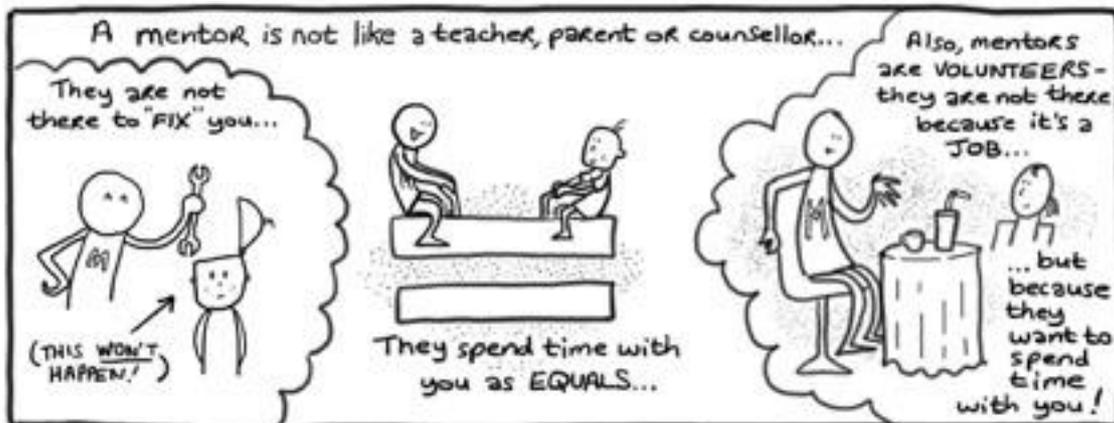
Of course this programme is set up to benefit the young person...

... But what can YOU get out of it?



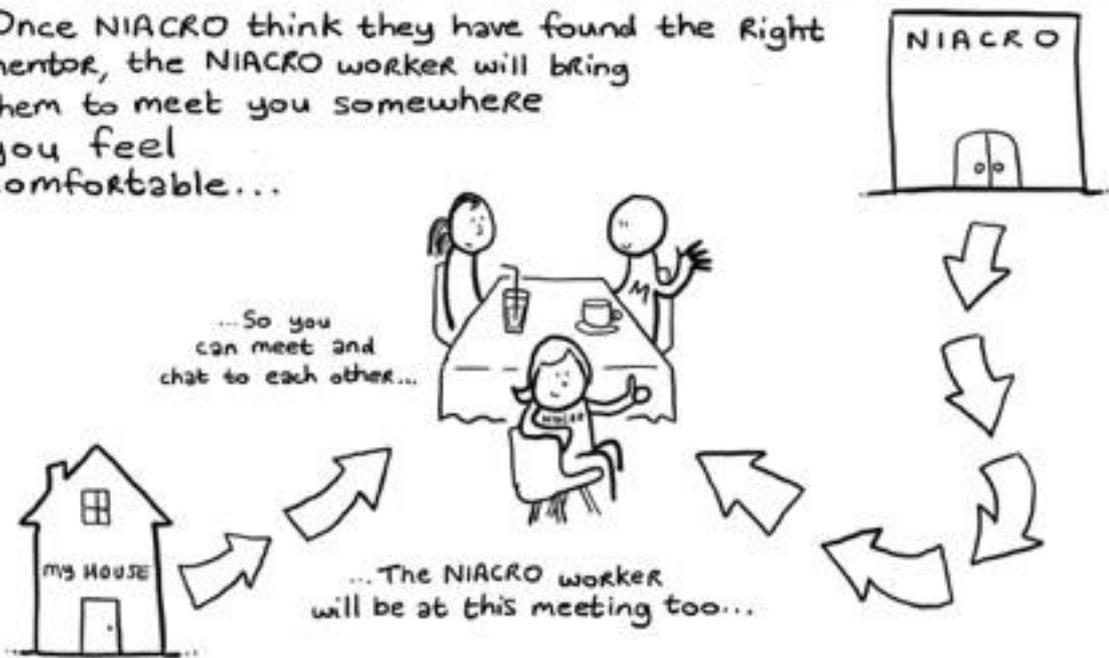
Appendix 1b: Comic strip developed by young people for future young people considering taking part in NIACRO mentoring projects

IS MENTORING RIGHT FOR YOU?





Once NIACRO think they have found the Right mentor, the NIACRO worker will bring them to meet you somewhere you feel comfortable...



You and your mentor will talk about what you want to get from your time...

...This could be something specific, like helping you prepare for your driving test...

...or a general goal, like building your confidence.

Hold on - this sounds like WORK - is this just like SCHOOL?

This is about YOU, and together you'll decide how to spend your time...

I liked going to COOKIEBOX or STARBUCKS to have something tasty and chat!

We tried out SEGWAYS!

Some things you might do with just your mentor...

You might do any of these things - or something else!

... Other things you might do with a group of other young people and their mentors...

We went on a ZIPWIRE!

We went to the PANTO!

I thought it would be for wee kids but I really enjoyed it!

You may even discover you like something that you never would have tried yourself...

The mentors are given a set budget to cover the things you do together...

It was nice to be able to do fun stuff without having to worry if I could afford it...

... But it was also good to work out how to plan a budget together...

If we do the CIRCUS, we would still have money to get COFFEE, we not to go to the CINEMA...

TO DO LIST

← YOUNG PERSON

What do **YOUNG** people get out of having a mentor?
 We asked some **YOUNG** people - this is what they said...

