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# Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Ireland: Evaluation Study

## REPORT 2: Qualitative Evidence

NOVEMBER 2010

Undertaken by the Child & Family Research Centre, NUI, Galway on behalf of Foróige.



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## Acronyms used

BBBS	Big Brothers Big Sisters
BBBSI	Big Brothers Big Sisters Ireland
CFRC	Child and Family Research Centre
FTE	full-time equivalent
FM	Foróige Manager
HSE	Health Service Executive
LB	Little Brother
LS	Little Sister
NUI	National University of Ireland
NYP	Neighbourhood Youth Project
PO	Project Officer
RCT	randomised control trial

# 1. Introduction

The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) youth mentoring programme has been run in Ireland by Foróige since 2001. The core component of the programme is a 'match' or friendship between an adult volunteer (mentor) and a young person (mentee), who meet weekly for a year or more and receive ongoing support from programme staff. It is believed that a caring and supportive friendship will develop, which will support the young person's positive personal and social development.

In 2007, Foróige commissioned the Child and Family Research Centre of the National University of Ireland, Galway, to evaluate the effectiveness of the BBBS programme in providing support for young people in Ireland. This large-scale, mixed methods study, conducted over a period of 2 years, is one of the most comprehensive ever undertaken in relation to service provision for young people in Ireland. There are three components in the overall study:

- a randomised control trial (RCT) study of the impact of the BBBS mentoring programme on the development of youth in the community over a 2-year period;
- a review of programme implementation;
- a qualitative assessment of match processes and the perspectives of stakeholders.

The findings of the research are outlined in a series of 3 reports:

- **Report 1** describes the overall study and outlines the findings from the RCT and the review of programme implementation.
- This **Report 2** is qualitative in nature and draws on case study data to provide greater understanding of the processes underpinning mentoring and the perspectives of stakeholders regarding its outcomes.
- **Report 3** integrates the findings of Reports 1 and 2 to make an overall assessment of the findings of the study and to offer some recommendations for practice and policy.

## BBBS Ireland programme

The BBBS programme supports the development of formal mentoring relationships between adults and young people. The target group for the programme is young people aged 10-18 years who meet the criteria for participation, which include having poor social skills, being shy or withdrawn, having low self-esteem and economic disadvantage. The core of the intervention is the 'match' between the young person and a voluntary mentor. The match is expected to meet for 1-2 hours per week for a minimum of one year, during which time it is hoped that a friendship will develop that will support the young person's personal and social development.



BBBS Ireland is part of the Foróige organisation and currently employs 21 people directly, 17 of whom are project officers directly delivering the BBBS programme throughout Ireland. Project officers are expected to operate the programme in strict accordance with the BBBS Service Delivery Manual. This sets out the procedures governing all aspects of the programme, including assessment of young people and mentors, training for volunteers, making a match, match supervision, match closure and keeping records. Supervision of matches is an important aspect of the programme and involves the project officers making contact with the young person, mentor and parent on a monthly basis or in response to needs as they arise. The files of project officers are subject to audit every year to ensure that the programme is being operated with fidelity to the manual.

BBBS Ireland works with a range of internal and external partners to extend the reach of its programme. Internal partners are community-based Foróige youth projects, while external partners are generally community-based projects managed by other youth work organisations or the Health Service Executive (HSE). Staff in these organisations are trained as BBBS case workers and manage a number of matches in their projects. BBBS Ireland is responsible for training and monitoring standards related to this intervention in these partner organisations.

## Report 1: Summary of findings

Report 1 outlined the design, analysis and findings of a randomised control trial (RCT) study of the BBBS youth mentoring programme. This type of evaluation design randomly allocates study participants to an intervention or control group, and compares their outcomes over the study period. This type of design was chosen on the basis that it could provide a causal link between intervention and outcome, or impact. The study was designed to explore if mentoring resulted in improved emotional well-being for young people, improved attitudes to school, reduced risk behaviour, better perceived social support and improved parental and peer relationships. The study sample consisted of 164 young people aged 10-14 who were newly referred to the BBBS programme in the West of Ireland in 2007. Young people, parents, mentors and teachers completed surveys at 4 time points over a 2-year period (October 2007 to October 2009). A range of analyses of youth and parent data was undertaken, including comparison of mean scores, calculation of effect sizes and multilevel regression analyses.

The study found that there were enhanced benefits for those taking part in the BBBS mentoring programme in addition to Foróige youth work programmes. Statistically significant outcomes were identified in the following areas:

- Young people taking part in Foróige youth services showed improved outcomes on most measures over the course of the 2-year study, with enhanced benefits found for those taking part in the BBBS mentoring programme in addition to Foróige youth work programmes.
- Young people matched with a mentor had consistently higher levels of hope or optimism across the study period than young people without a mentor.
- The intervention was successful in improving young people's sense of being supported by parents, siblings, friends and other adults.

There was some evidence of positive trends in the following areas:

- Young people matched with a mentor were seen to like school better and to show greater intent to finish school and go on and finish college than those not matched with a mentor.
- There was some evidence that young people with a mentor had more positive relationships with other people and felt more accepted by their peers.
- Although not statistically significant, there were promising indications from the data that young people matched with a mentor were less likely to have initiated alcohol use or smoking cannabis than those not mentored.

The findings also suggest that the intervention can play a particular role in increasing the support available to young people in one-parent households.

The study also found that the BBBS programme was implemented to a very high standard and can be considered an example of best practice in service provision for young people.

## Report 2: Aims and objectives

The main body of research into youth mentoring is quantitative in nature. This research indicates that it makes a difference to young people in psychological, social, academic and job-related areas (DuBois *et al*, 2002; Tierney *et al*, 1995). Such quantitative research is of value in helping to understand at an aggregate level how mentoring works.

In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in qualitative work on mentoring (see, for example, Spencer, 2006; Spencer and Liang, 2009; Philip *et al*, 2004), which has illuminated the human emotions and relational processes that are at play in mentoring. A mixed methods approach was adopted in the present study since it combines the advantages of a large-scale quantitative assessment with the benefits of the deeper probing that can be gained through qualitative work (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The logic model for the study was selected based on a review of the literature in relation to mentoring processes and outcomes, and is guided largely by the model of youth mentoring developed by Jean Rhodes (2005), entitled 'Pathways of mentoring influence' (see *appendix 2*). This logic model is used as a framework to guide both the quantitative and qualitative work.

The qualitative strand reported here focuses specifically on the findings of 9 longitudinal case studies of mentoring pairs undertaken as part of this study. The aim of the case studies was to explore the perspectives of young people, parents, mentors and project workers regarding the outcomes of mentoring relationships and the factors that contribute to the achievement of or absence of these outcomes. In this way, the study aims to illuminate some of the themes developed in the larger RCT study (see *Report 1*).

The research questions used to structure the analysis were as follows:

- What types of support are provided to young people through the programme?
- Is there evidence that mentoring impacts on young people in the areas of emotional well-being, education, risk behaviour and relationships? If yes, in what ways?
- What factors influenced or moderated whether these outcomes were realised?

## Methodology

There were 72 young people matched with a mentor as part of the randomised control trial (RCT) study (see *Report 1*). The research team asked BBBS project staff to identify matches that were established and that would be willing to participate in a series of interviews. A total of 21 matches agreed to participate. The research team then reviewed this sample and selected a purposive sample of 10 case studies representing a balance across characteristics of age, gender, location, family situation and reason for referral. The case studies were conducted in two phases – at the early stages of the mentoring relationship and approximately 6 months later:

- The first round of interviews was undertaken with young people, parents, mentors and staff in each case between October 2008 and March 2009, when 34 interviews were completed.
- The second round of interviews was conducted with each case study between May and October 2009. On this occasion, 31 interviews were completed.

In the case of one match, only one interview was completed so the case study was not included in the analysis as it provided insufficient data; in this case, the young person and their family could not be contacted by

programme staff. Table 1 shows the levels of participation in each of the 9 case studies investigated. As can be seen, 3 cases had incomplete data as it was not possible to meet with all the participants to complete all the case study interviews. In the case of Match 1, the mentor became ill and had to withdraw from the programme; the young person was re-matched and the new mentor was interviewed as part of the second round of data collection (Time 2). By the time of the second round of interviews, 2 matches had closed (Match No. 6 and 7). Interviews were conducted with the parent and staff member in the first case and the staff member in the second case; the other parties did not wish to be interviewed. In almost all cases, youth, parents, mentors and staff were interviewed separately. All the parents interviewed were mothers. This was not a deliberate decision by the research team, but rather a reflection of the fact that it is usually the mother who is the primary point of contact for the programme and therefore the person who agrees to be interviewed.

**Table 1: Details of case study sample**

Area	Match No.	Gender	Time 1				No. of months meeting at Time 1	Time 2				No. of months meeting at Time 2
			Youth	Parent	Mentor	Staff		Youth	Parent	Mentor	Staff	
Galway	1	F	✓	✓			5*	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Galway	2	M	✓	✓	✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	14
Galway	3	M	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	Match ending after 16 months
Mayo	4	M	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	14
Mayo	5	F	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Mayo	6	F	✓	✓	✓	✓	9		✓		✓	Match ending after 15 months
Mayo	7	M	✓	✓	✓	✓	6				✓	Match ending after 9 months
Roscommon	8	F	✓	✓	✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
Roscommon	9	M	✓	✓	✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
No. of interviews by source			9	9	8	8		7	8	7	9	
Total no. of interviews			34					31				
Average length of match Time 1			5.2					Average length of match Time 2				12.7

\* This young person had two mentoring relationships. The first one lasted 5 months. She was then re-matched within a month with the second match, still ongoing at the second round of interviews.

The average match had been meeting for 5.2 months at the time of the first interviews (*Time 1 in Table 1*). By the second round of interviews, for the 7 matches still participating in the study, the average match length was 12.7 months (*Time 2 in Table 1*). Based on the finding by Grossman and Rhodes (2002) that mentoring relationships take at least 6 months to get established, the matches at Time 1 of the analysis were just forming, whereas they were well-established by the time of the second interview at Time 2. It should also be noted that the programme requirement is for mentors to commit to meeting up for one year. Five out of the 7 matches still continuing at the second round of interviews had exceeded this one-year limit and should therefore be seen as representing well-established relationships, with both parties interested in maintaining the relationship beyond the expectations of the programme.

The interviews were conducted by three members of the research team and semi-structured interview schedules were used to ensure consistency in the approach to all case studies (*see Appendix 1*). In the first round of interviews, the 'Staff' interview involved the BBBS case worker<sup>1</sup> being interviewed first and the format consisted of asking him or her to review the particular match file, noting salient information on the reason of referral, the matching process, the initial meeting and the ongoing maintenance of the match and any issues arising. The 'Youth' interview consisted of three parts: initial introductory questions, the young person's opinion about the BBBS programme and their feedback on the mentor and the mentoring relationship. The 'Parent' interview consisted of asking them about the BBBS programme, the mentoring relationship and also about the young person and their relationships at home. Finally, the 'Mentor' interview consisted of asking them about the BBBS programme, the mentoring relationship and any relevant background information on why they wanted to become involved.

In the second round of interviews, the young person and parent were asked about how things were going with the young person in general, their experiences of the programme and how the mentoring relationship was working out. The mentor was asked about their experiences of the programme and how the mentoring relationship was developing. The case worker was asked about the status of the mentoring relationship.

All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed in full, with the exception of 2 cases where the parent did not wish herself or her child's interview to be recorded and so detailed written notes were taken for these interviews. The transcripts were read through several times to enable the researcher to get a sense of the development of each match and to reflect on how the processes described by the theoretical model were evident in each case. NVivo software was then used to assist with the coding process. The data were thematically coded according to the questions outlined above. Sub-themes were then developed for each question. For example, in relation to emotional well-being, 3 themes that emerged were 'happy', 'calm' and 'confident', and these were used as sub-themes for this strand. When all 9 case studies had been coded, the researcher re-read the transcripts and interview notes in full to ensure that nothing had been missed and some revisions were made.

Having 4 perspectives on each case study was very useful since it enabled triangulation to occur, whereby viewpoints regarding outcomes or processes could be compared. Having multiple perspectives helped to build a strong sense of the match and enabled the research team to state with greater certainty that particular processes or outcomes had occurred. Throughout the report, quotes from more than one stakeholder in each case study are often used to illustrate this triangulation. The report of findings was then written, based on the coded data and drawing on literature that could illuminate the themes emerging.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'case worker' is used throughout this report to refer to the staff person responsible for managing the match. This includes BBBS project officers and Foróige project officers.

## Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided full written consent and had the study explained to them verbally and in a written summary. Code numbers, rather than names, were assigned as identifiers for transcripts in order to ensure that the anonymity of research participants was protected. Recordings are held securely on a password-protected computer, while any printed transcripts are stored in a locked filing cabinet at NUI Galway. Quotes from the study's participants are given throughout the report; with the exception of minor details to protect identity, they have been subject to minimal editing in order to retain the tenor of the comments made. Case profiles or vignettes were not included in the report because of the greater risk of identifying the people involved.

## Profile of case study participants

Overall, 5 male and 4 female matches took part in the case studies, with an average age of 12 for the young person involved at the time of referral. While most lived in or near an urban centre, only 3 of the young people lived with both parents at the time of referral. All the young people were Irish and one participant belonged to the Traveller community. The young people were dealing with a range of family and personal issues, including the break-up of their parents' relationship, bereavement, incarceration of family members, behavioural problems and literacy difficulties.

The average age of the mentor was 33 on recruitment to the BBBS programme. The majority of mentors were single, with some third-level education. They were all Irish and their most common reason for volunteering was 'to contribute something to society'.

## Structure of Report 2

Following this introduction, *Chapter 2* focuses on the types of support provided to young people through the BBBS programme, using the framework developed by Cutrona and Russell (1990) to distinguish between 4 dimensions of support: (a) concrete, (b) emotional, (c) esteem and (d) advice. *Chapter 3* describes the perceived outcomes identified in the analysis of case study data. Based on the logic model guiding the research, evidence of 5 types of outcomes was sought: emotional well-being, education, risk behaviour, relationships with parents and relationships with peers. *Chapter 4* identifies a range of moderating factors that can influence the degree to which outcomes emerge from the programme, including the quality or closeness of the mentoring relationship, programme practices, frequency of meeting, duration and ending of matches, the needs of the young person and the community context. Finally, *Chapter 5* summarises the key findings of the study.

## 2. Nature of support provided to young people in mentoring relationships

There is a large body of research illustrating the benefits of perceived availability of social support during adolescence (Bal *et al*, 2003), with better mental and physical health outcomes associated with supportive relationships. One of the primary purposes of mentoring programmes is to create meaningful changes in the social support that young people receive (Barrera and Bonds, 2005). The first research question in this study was to find out in what ways are young people supported through the BBBS programme. The case study data were analysed for evidence of different forms of support and a framework developed by Cutrona and Russell (1990) was used to distinguish between 4 different forms of support – concrete, emotional, esteem and advice.

**Note:** In the quotes from participants, 'BB' stands for Big Brother (male adult mentor); 'LB' for Little Brother (male young mentee); 'BS' for Big Sister (female adult mentor); and 'LS' for Little Sister (female young mentee).

### Concrete support

Concrete support is described as the provision of practical acts of assistance (Cutrona, 2000). In the present study, one of the most obvious ways in which mentors provided practical support to young people and their parents was in bringing the young person out of the home and introducing them to new places, people and activities. Many of the parents and young people said that, because their families were quite large, the parent(s) would not have time to bring the young person to the places they could go to with their mentor. In some cases, mentors provided transport to young people in rural areas who would otherwise not have been able to go places independently.

*Parent/Match 2: It takes him away for the hour anyway ... for him to get places because I don't bring him any places myself ... I have kids at home, it's very hard, so it's good, like, to see them going out doing things like that.*

Parents, such as the one just quoted, were very conscious of the value of their son or daughter taking part in social activities. Much has been written about the importance of social participation or integration in supportive relationships (Barrera and Ainlay, 1983; Weiss, 1973), whereby people benefit from meeting others, having companionship and sharing leisure activities. A number of parents referred to the fact that their child had a tendency towards introversion and that the mentoring relationship gave him or her opportunities to be more sociable:

*Parent/Match 7: I'm finding it's good for him because he's inclined to stay in the house a lot. He has only one, two good friends that he plays with and when they're not there, he's in the house. He won't really go out and interact with other children.*

This support can also be conceptualised as a form of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000; Hamilton and Hamilton, 2004), whereby young people were helped to make use of social and community resources and to take advantage of opportunities emanating from the mentors' own social networks and connections (Dubas and Snider, 1993). For example, the young person in Match 9 had played football in the past and, according to his mentor, had been quite good at it but had 'drifted away' from the sport. As his mentor describes below, he re-introduced him to the football club and believes that his contacts in the club will be 'good to him'. This reflects Keller's (2007) perspective – that the mentor may mediate the acquisition of social capital by fostering relationships to others in the community who then become advocates for the young person. Keller suggests that this exposure to a larger community of adults may positively influence the young person's transition to adulthood.

*Mentor/Match 9: He's back playing sport and I'm very involved in sport here. Which means I know everybody that's in charge of things and ... they know the situation and they will be good to him too ... and he's actually playing good sport.*

Another example of concrete support was given by the young person in Match 3, who described how he uses his mentor's laptop to enable him to release songs they had mixed using DJ equipment in a local youth café. It shows how this material support (Barrera and Ainlay, 1983) enabled him to tap into the creative and communication potential of new technology.

*Young person/Match 3: We'll record them off the decks in the [youth café] in town and then we send them to BB's laptop and then BB will send them to my phone and I'll put them up on YouTube and I'll send them out to a few friends and tell them if they give their friends a few tracks and send them on and that's the way it grows and grows and grows. But there is this one song that I put a tracker on, so every time it's sent to a phone or listened to, I'll get an e-mail about it. I got a reference e-mail there about 3 weeks ago, and it's got over 16,000 listens, so it's brilliant.*

In summary, therefore, concrete support mostly refers to the obvious aspects of the relationship, such as taking the young person on outings and enabling them to take part in activities that they may not otherwise get to do. Through offering this form of support, mentors generally introduce young people to a broader social network and make connections for them with people who have the capacity to offer them opportunities for further development. This is probably the easiest form of support for a mentor to offer since it can be done without necessarily having a close bond. Supportive acts of this nature, however, can help to create a context and structure from which a friendship and discovery of shared interests can emerge, and from which emotional, esteem and advice support can more readily be offered and accepted.

## Emotional support

Cobb (1976) described emotional support as information that leads a person to believe they are cared for. It is considered one of the most valuable forms of support because it can potentially be used in all situations (Cutrona, 1996). In this study, there was evidence that the mentors were interested in the young person, listened to what they had to say and provided emotional support. All of the mentors referred to the conversations they had with their 'little' (i.e. little brother/sister, or mentee) as an important part of the relationship and were happy to take the lead from the young person regarding what he or she wished to talk about, as the following quote illustrates:

*Mentor/Match 7: I suppose we go for chats, helps him maybe relieve thoughts that he'd had on his mind or in his head, and he gets them out there and we discuss them.*

Empathy is an important attribute in emotional support, defined by Spencer (2006) as understanding another person's frame of reference and emotional experience. In this study, there were many examples of the mentor empathising with the young person:

*Mentor/Match 8:* I suppose for me, coming from a big family too, there is a need to spend a bit of time with someone on your own. I would have been aware of it when I was younger too and I suppose because of my background and my upbringing and problems in my childhood, it would have been a lovely thing for me to have had somebody that you could just spend a bit of one-to-one time with, away from your home and away from your school and away from all the other influences in your life. Somebody that comes in and is just dropped in your life, completely neutral, doesn't know anything about your past, doesn't know anything about your future, your family, and is just there to be with you.

*Mentor/Match 1:* It's funny because ... she's that little bit younger than you, but you can still look at her problems ... I remember, like you know, boy problems or this or that. And you can just be, like, 'Oh God, I wouldn't have minded having someone'.

According to Darling *et al* (2003), the degree to which young people draw on emotional support from their mentor will vary according to their level of need for such support. There was certainly variation in the degree to which young people in this study opened up to their mentor about personal issues. Some young people were open from the start, while others became more comfortable with divulging personal difficulties as the relationship became closer. Some young people did not confide in their mentors about personal issues at any stage of the relationship, but appeared to derive support and encouragement with normative pressures such as school and exams. The following quotes from mentors highlight their different experiences in this regard:

*Mentor/Match 6:* Well, I feel ... she seemed to find it easy to talk and spoke about things that were quite personal and ... I felt that she wouldn't have spoken maybe to anybody else. It was kind of fairly intimate stuff, you know.

*Mentor/Match 5:* She's never come to me with a problem or mentioned really any difficulties in her life. So we've more of a friendship, where we'd be catching up on different things that are happening in her life, where she is with competitions or what she's doing, you know, those exams for starting secondary school. She might mention anxieties about doing those ... But it really would have been more of a friendship rather than anything else.

Some mentors supported their mentees in dealing with emotions and behavioural issues that enabled them to interact more effectively with others and to deal with negative situations, such as bullying. Rhodes quotes Gottman (2001) who referred to this as 'emotion coaching', whereby adults model and teach strategies for managing emotions and feelings. For example, the parent in Match 1 described how her daughter's mentor helped her to deal with bullying through a combination of emotional and advice support. It illustrates how the mentor was attempting to build the young person's capacity to be able to cope with such issues in the future, by building her confidence and advising her of her need to 'stick up for herself'. This reflects Rhodes' (2005) view that mentors can help young people to build their personal resources and deal more effectively with negative experiences.

*Parent/Match 1:* She [daughter] was going through a rough patch at the time and I was just pulling my hair out with her, you know. She was being bullied in school and no matter what I did, it was making it worse in her eyes. So this BS was a great help ... She actually sat with her and spoke to her and said, 'Well look, you don't need to put up with this bullying'. LS herself actually told me that BS explained this to her and she's at the end of the phone and she meets her and all that. But she is going to have to try and stick up for herself as well. Gave her a little bit of confidence.

Because people deal with stress in different ways, as Cutrona (2000) points out, support that does not match the individual's style of coping will not be effective. For some young people, particularly girls, talking about the stress in their lives was their preferred way of coping, whereas others, particularly boys, appeared to derive emotional support from their mentor to deal with difficult personal issues without openly discussing the issue with them. A case in point is the young person in Match 9 who did not mention his parents' break-up to his mentor until a few months after it had happened, but his mother believes that he took emotional comfort from the consistency of the presence of the mentor in his life, as this quote suggests:



*Parent/Match 9:* I mean, he's [son] come through a marriage break-up as well. Myself and his father broke up in the last year, so there has been an awful lot of changes for him. But I just think that BB gives him that stability, whereas I didn't and his father didn't. He still has a continuum with BB – he was still here on the dot every week, once a week, sometimes twice a week. So it's certainly helped ... He's had consistency as far as BB goes.

Similarly, the case worker in Match 7 believed that the young person involved saw his meetings with his mentor as a space in which he could escape from the stresses in his life:

*Case worker/Match 7:* I think it was an outlet for LB ... Mum said to me when he comes up to the estate, he's being bullied at school and also on the estate, very little friends ... By meeting BB, it was something that he took ownership of himself and that he didn't share with anybody else.

Emotional support, therefore, took many forms, including the mentor listening to and empathising with the young person and acting as a 'sounding board' for daily events and challenges. Some young people talked openly about personal issues and directly sought support in addressing them, while others may not have had personal difficulties in their lives or preferred not to discuss them. This illustrates how mentoring relationships can be used as a resource to help young people to cope in whatever way they feel comfortable. It can be considered an example of 'optimal matching', whereby the support offered matches the need of the intended recipient (Cutrona, 2000). However, the closer and better established the relationship, the more comfortable the young person is likely to be in seeking the 'optimal' support required for their needs.

## Esteem support

Cutrona (2000) refers to esteem support as one person expressing love and concern for the other. In relation to mentoring, Rhodes (2005) refers to Mead's (1934) theory on how young people can start to see themselves as how others see them, and so if they are viewed positively by their mentor, they start to see themselves more positively. In this way, esteem support can contribute to the process of identity development, which is one of the core processes at the heart of Rhodes' model of youth mentoring (see Appendix 2). In the present study, young people seemed to derive esteem support from the fact that their mentor was willing to give up their time voluntarily to spend time with them. There were also examples of encouragement and praise from the mentor to the young person, as reflected in the following quotes:

*Mentor/Match 3:* There was a recognition event for Big Brothers Big Sisters and he mc'd ... I got such a buzz out of watching him, everyone else got a buzz and then he was just on an absolute high. He just thought this was the bees' knees and I suppose in a way if it hadn't been for the Big Brothers Big Sisters thing, he never would have got the opportunity to do that, which is cool.

*Case worker/Match 9:* BB would be very encouraging towards LB and telling him, you know, he's done really well and this is great for him.

*Case worker/Match 5:* Yeah, she always has a big smile on her face when she's talking about BS, you know, looks forward to the call. Yeah, I mean, I think it was LS's Confirmation there a while ago and, do you know, BS sent her a card and gave her a present and she thought the world of that ... So things like that meant a lot to the child, you know.

Much has been written about the importance of reciprocity as a quality of supportive relationships. Relationships in which there is mutual assistance, rather than one-way giving, are likely to be stronger as there is greater equality (Cutrona, 2000, p. 115). A number of the matches in this study appeared to be characterised by reciprocity, whereby the mentor perceived that he or she was gaining from the relationship and not just offering support. This reciprocity has the capacity to build the self-esteem of a young person because they are likely to feel that they can make a worthwhile contribution to the relationship. For example, the parent of the young person in Match 1 (see below) described how her daughter helped her mentor to overcome a fear of swimming. Similarly, the mentor in Match 2 (see below) described how his mentee showed him how to play handball, which

they both enjoyed. It is possible that these experiences, as well as being enjoyable, helped the young person to develop their identities as being someone with something valuable to contribute to others.

*Parent/Match 1:* BS has a fear of water like myself. I cannot go into a swimming pool. But LS made BS go in and BS loves it now ... LS goes, 'Oh my God, I helped my big sister' ... because LS is a great swimmer and BS has a fear of swimming, so it worked out well.

*Mentor/Match 2:* Handball was something that I wasn't really familiar with or I never did, but he had done it previously. So he was kind of showing me something and we both really enjoyed it.

This reciprocity was most evident in close, developmental relationships in which the mentor saw the young person as an equal and did not see it as his or her role to change them. This, once again, underlines the fact that support is more easily given and received in relationships that are close, natural and well-established.

## Advice support

The final type of support identified in Cutrona and Russell's (1990) typology is advice support, referring to acts of advice or guidance. In mentoring relationships, advice and guidance is likely to be more readily accepted if it is provided in a way that does not make the recipient feel diminished by the experience. In the present study, the ability to offer advice was something that came more easily when the relationship was better established and where advice could be given in the course of a normal conversation. For example, one mentor described how his mentee asked his advice regarding school and education:

*Mentor/Match 9:* With regard to school, I suppose he's not been asking me advice, but we have kind of ended up talking about it and what he was going to do after the Junior Cert. Was he going to do Transition Year? Was he going to go straight into 5th year? Things like that. So, yes, I suppose he would have asked me advice on that or I'd have given my advice. I'm not sure which. So, yes, we talked a good bit about that actually.

The young person in Match 2 was described by both the mentor and the case worker as reluctant to take guidance or instruction, and did not want to do anything he 'could not be the best at', with the result that his literacy skills were poor since he would not accept extra tuition at school. His mentor described how he encouraged reciprocity in the relationship as a way of enabling the young person to allow him to teach him new skills:

*Mentor/Match 2:* I reassure him that I don't know everything and there's things that he can teach me, so he can feel that he knows something that he's teaching me. So then, when the time comes and the reverse is there, he'll accept it more.

*Case worker/Match 2:* The volunteer [BB] used to teach IT and he realised one day that the young person had never been on the Internet, knew nothing about it or how to use it. So the volunteer was trying to encourage him to come into the Internet café and he was, like, going 'Sure, I'll teach you a little bit about it'. And as soon as LB heard that, no, he didn't want to do it. So the volunteer said, 'I didn't push it, but we said we'd go for a run and then it started really pelting rain, so we only went for a run for 20 minutes. On the way back to his house, we passed another Internet café and ... I said, "Sure, we only got to run for 20 minutes. We'll pop in here for half an hour, what do you think?" ' And he just went 'OK'. So they went in and he showed him a couple of things and he really got into it and doesn't mind, and the volunteer, because he knows what he's like, just stroking his ego and saying, 'Sure, three or four times you'll be teaching me stuff, how to do stuff'. He was delighted with himself, that he had learned something, whereas if he'd been pushed into it, he would have said 'No way'.

These quotes illustrate how a non-directive and non-critical approach – considered essential qualities in supportive relationships (Cutrona, 2000) – can create opportunities for the provision of advice and guidance in mentoring relationships.

## Summary

There were many different types of support provided through the BBBS programme. These included practical support, such as bringing the young person out and introducing them to new activities and people. Young people appeared to gain from emotional support in the relationship to varying degrees, with some appearing to draw on the mentoring relationship as a source of support in normative daily life, while others dealing with more difficult situations were helped to develop emotional competence and manage negative emotions. There was also evidence of esteem support, whereby the young person was likely to have gained from the positive regard of the mentor and from being able to offer reciprocal support. Mentors were also seen as being able to offer advice and guidance in a way that would make it accepted, or acceptable, by the young person.

The evidence suggests that the closer the mentor–mentee relationship, the more seamlessly these forms of support could be transmitted, thus reflecting the consensus in the mentoring literature on the importance of relationship quality (Keller, 2005, Rhodes, 2005). Chapter 3 now focuses on the outcomes that were described by young people, parents, mentors and case workers as accruing from this support.

# 3. Perceived outcomes from mentoring relationships

Studies of mentoring programmes have shown evidence of outcomes in the areas of perceived support in emotional well-being, education and risk behaviour (DuBois *et al*, 2002, Blinn-Pike, 2007; Tierney *et al*, 1995). They have also shown that young people can have improved relationships with parents and peers (Rhodes, 2005). In the present study, the analysis of the case study data involved identifying evidence of outcomes in relation to these areas.

## Emotional well-being

The concept of emotional well-being in this context refers to aspects of psychological and behavioural functioning, such as feelings about self, interpersonal relationships and mental health (Blinn-Pike, 2007). A number of themes clearly emerged from the data in relation to this area. In particular, the terms 'happier', 'confident' and 'calmer' were consistently used by parents and young people to describe the changes since the young person was matched with their mentor.

Spencer (2006) draws our attention to relational theories that explain how companionship can lead to increased happiness. Engaging in shared leisure activities with someone you like, and who you know likes you, enhances the pleasure of everyday life and contributes to better emotional well-being (Spencer, 2006; Rook and Underwood, 2000).

All the cases in the present study referred to the fact that the young person was 'happy' and enjoyed meeting with their mentor, as the following quotes illustrate:

*Interviewer: How do you feel when you are with her?*

*Young person/Match 8: Really happy.*

*Mentor/Match 9: He goes home and he actually says thank you and he's happy. He seems to be happy and he rings me now as much as I ring him.*

*Interviewer: And how is it going overall?*

*Young person/Match 3: It's going brilliant.*

*Interviewer: What's brilliant about it?*

*Young person/Match 3: It's going out, having a laugh, just being able to ... have a good time.*

*Interviewer: What do you like about having a Big Sister?*

*Young person/Match 6: I don't really know. It's like if you have more time or something.*

*Interviewer: OK.*

*Young person/Match 6: It's like she makes you happy ...*

Another word that was used to describe perceived changes in the young person since starting on the programme was 'calmer'. Parents and young people in particular referred to the fact that the match appeared to have a calming influence on the young person, especially in cases where the young person, usually a male, would have been described as having a tendency to be 'hyper'.

*Interviewer: Do you think other people should have Big Brothers?*

*Young person/Match 2: They'd be a lot quieter if they did. They'd calm down, they'd be more fun. You'd meet up then with your Big Brothers and it would be a lot better, so a few more people should have them.*

In the case of Match 3, the case worker spoke of how it was hoped that the interest shown by the mentor would make this young person have less need to 'act out' to get attention. The testimonies of the young person himself, his parent and his mentor suggest that the strategy was working, as the following quotes illustrate:

*Mentor/Match 3: Like, if I hadn't seen him acting up in school (when I would have been in doing the surveys, for instance) – he would have been one of the ones that was a nightmare to do a survey with when there were other kids around because he acts the clown, be threatening them, everything. But then I've seen him when he's on his own and he's an angel. He's like two different people. So I guess we're just trying to get more of the good side of him to win over the bad side. And the hope would be that when he's getting the attention from his Big [BB], he'll just learn that he doesn't need to act up all the time.*

*Parent/Match 3: LB can be a bit hyper at times. After he went out with BB, you can tell he enjoyed it because he would come back and he would be chilled out and relaxed.*

*Interviewer: Do you like school?*

*Young person/Match 3: Last couple of years I didn't. I was in trouble nearly every second day. But this year now, yes, getting on well.*

Similarly, the young person in Match 9 was described as being 'hyper' and was believed to have calmed down as a result of the influence of his mentor. His mentor had strong expectations for good behaviour and believed that the young person knows he must behave if he wants to take part in activities with his mentor. His mother felt that he was somewhat calmer and had a better understanding of how to interact with adults. This parent also spoke of the fact that her son wanted his own way and 'stomped' if he did not get it. Through his match, he learned of the need to share and this behaviour was improving.

*Mentor/Match 9: Well, in the beginning he was kind of wild and he was all talking and he couldn't stay steady if he was down there playing pool. He'd be ... just completely hyper. So now he's quietened, he's settled down. But he's cute enough to know that he'll have a good time if he behaves and if he doesn't behave, he won't have a good time. So that's quite simple.*

*Parent/Match 9: I think it's calmed him down a little bit ... If he don't get his own way, he's like an anti-Christ. But when BB took him and he's playing football with everybody, he's got to learn to share the ball, it's not just a one-man team. He's kind of coming out of that now. The stomping is finished.*

The parent in Match 7 spoke of how her son's participation in the BBBS programme and attending the Neighbourhood Youth Project had helped him to deal with his temper:

*Parent/Match 7: He would still have a temper now, would be very quick-tempered, but maybe not as much as he would have been, even before he started coming in here. It's been good for him. The whole situation has been good for him, I think.*

Similarly, the case worker in Match 4 believed that a positive difference had been made by the mentor challenging the young person in relation to his difficult behaviour in groups. The quote from the young person (*see below*) suggests that he learned how to 'sort out' differences of opinion in a more adult way. It reflects Rhodes' (2005) view that positive relationships with mentors can generalise, enabling young people to interact with others more effectively.

*Case worker/Match 4:* But I think BB has done a good job in that LB would have a tendency, especially in the groups here, to throw a strop, go into a huff, be hypersensitive to situations if he's checked at all, just goes silent in the corner and won't engage in activities ... BB has been able to show him that you can't act like that and you can't get angry over the smallest things and you can't just go off in a huff. So LB is learning gradually about that. BB is kind of showing him that you can't act like that, that there are other ways of dealing with his anger.

*Interviewer:* What is the least best thing about it [mentoring relationship]?

*Young person/Match 4:* You can have fights, get moody, both of us, but mostly me. But you can sort it out.

As these examples show, the word 'calmer' was used mostly in relation to boys. Whereas most of the boys were described as being 'attention-seeking', the girls were described as 'quiet' and somewhat 'withdrawn'. A number of parents spoke of the increased confidence they witnessed in their children as a consequence of their taking part in BBBS. For example, the parent in Match 8 spoke of how her daughter had gained in confidence from the programme; she mentioned in particular the weekend trip for matches as helping her daughter to make friends and 'come out of herself':

*Interviewer:* And you were saying earlier that she's come out of herself a bit?

*Parent/Match 8:* Oh, definitely.

*Interviewer:* So, in what way would you see that?

*Parent/Match 8:* Just in her general attitude. Say we were talking about something, you know, even at home, she'd sit there and she'd just take it all in. But now she's more likely to contribute her opinion, which is kind of like the little voice in the corner has come out.

The same parent (Match 8) also commented that the individual attention provided to her daughter by the mentor, allied to the fact that the mentor supported her to get out and meet people in different situations, had given her more confidence:

*Parent/Match 8:* We have a big family, but I'd say it's time on her own, just for herself [that has benefited her]. Because, like, I have six kids, so it's hard to get time alone with each one. So I think she enjoys time for herself. She can do whatever she wants without having to compete with anybody else, so she seems to have grown in confidence.

Parents of boys also referred to increased confidence. For example, the parent in Match 3 spoke of the fact that her son had suffered a serious illness that had somewhat inhibited his social development. Taking part in the programme had knock-on effects in other areas of his life: he now goes out more, has a girlfriend and takes more interest in his appearance.

*Parent/Match 3:* You see, after he got sick, he wasn't allowed outside the door ... we wouldn't let him out because we were afraid ... He never went outside the door. And now that BB is on the scene, he's got a girlfriend and every night he goes out. Maybe it's two different things, I don't know ... it's like he's got some confidence.

In summary, there are a number of ways in which young people gained in emotional well-being from taking part in the BBBS programme. Firstly, all of the 9 young people were described as 'happy' and appeared to derive great enjoyment from their match – an emotional state associated with well-being. This is likely to be as a result of opportunities to engage in new activities and enjoy the companionship that shared activities can bring. Secondly, the process of 'emotion coaching' (described earlier in relation to some young people with behavioural, emotional and relationship issues, see *Chapter 2, 'Emotional support'*) appears to have had the effect of making some young people calmer and more in control of their behaviour at home and in social settings. Thirdly, there were reports by parents and case workers of increased confidence in some young people, particularly girls who had previously been shy and withdrawn.

## Education

Research suggests that mentors can influence young people's attitudes to education in a number of ways, such as through giving positive messages about the value of school, helping with homework and providing advice, guidance and encouragement (Rhodes, 2005; DuBois *et al*, 2002). The issue of education and school was referred to by all mentors as something they considered important and wished to positively influence in the young person. Mentors, therefore, had to strike a balance between ensuring that the match was about friendship and fun, but also conveying what they felt to be important messages about schooling at the same time. All mentors taking part in this research said that they would talk about school with their mentee, ask the young person how he or she was getting on and would often discuss their plans for their future education. Many of the mentors said that they used these conversations as opportunities to emphasize the value of education and school, but that the young people did not wish to formally get help with school work or planning, even when it was offered. There were no examples of mentors actually helping young people with their homework, as described in Spencer (2006) and other qualitative studies on mentoring.

*Mentor/Match 2: I've broached the idea, 'Do you want a little bit of help with your maths or anything like that?' and he just, like, cut me straight off – 'No. Don't do it outside of school'.*

*Mentor/Match 6: I kind of stress the thing about education. I always ask about school and how it's going and is she finding anything difficult. And I have said if she wanted help with her homework, if that ever came up. But no, straight away she said no about that. So that was that.*

The case study evidence suggests that talking about school, peer relationships, exams and future plans featured prominently in discussions between Big and Little Sisters. Apart from one girl who had been bullied, there were no references to difficulties at school for the girls. These girls were likely to have benefited from emotional support from their mentor in dealing with school-related issues, such as transition into secondary school, exam stress and peer relationships. They may also have been motivated by seeing their mentor as living a life that they aspired to. For example, one girl who wanted to be a lawyer was matched with a post-graduate law student who could tell her about what college was like. This girl was doing well at school and was likely to have benefited from seeing a version of her 'possible self' (Marcus and Nurius, 1986):

*Young person/Match 5: I want to be a lawyer because I like the idea of bringing justice, I'd like to make a difference ... BS is studying to be a lawyer ... she is doing courses for it. It takes a long time to be a lawyer. My friend is going to go to college too. It would be cool to go to Dublin.*

In terms of evidence of outcomes relating to education, parents of boys taking part in the study were more likely to report improved school-related outcomes for their sons than were parents of girls. Firstly, in keeping with the findings related to emotional well-being (*see above*), a number of case studies showed that young boys were calmer or more settled at school. Secondly, there was evidence in one case of a young person developing a clear sense of direction in life, which resulted in a radical change in his approach to school. Thirdly, there were examples of non-formal education whereby young people were exposed to learning experiences likely to be of value in life, if not in the formal education system. Each of these outcomes is now discussed in turn.

The evidence suggests that the young person's greater sense of well-being as a result of their match appeared to be making them more settled at school. For example, one parent (Match 9) said that she was not called into the school to deal with behavioural incidents as much as before and felt that it was because her son had 'calmed down' since becoming involved with BBBS. Similarly, the parent and young person in Match 2 and the mentor in Match 3 described how the young person was more settled at school since taking part in the BBBS programme:

*Parent/Match 2: He's kind of quietened down a lot. He was fidgety, do you know, but he's settled down well. He's come on a lot and learned a lot ... very good at school now, no complaints or anything so far, thank God for that ... Yeah, it changed. Very good, now. I've had no complaints this year at all from the school, so that's good.*

*Young person/Match 2:* Yeah ... Last year I was really wild ... BB told me to calm down and all that. So it's not too bad now.

*Mentor/Match 3:* He went back in September. Now he'd be well known in school for being a messer. I think he rang me and I said to him 'How's school?' The joke is how is school and he will always say 'We're not allowed talk about that', but then he always will. But he said, 'It's going great. All my teachers say I'm a changed man'.

There was an example of where the BBBS programme appeared to have a transformative effect on one young person, which led to a change in his attitude and performance at school. This young person and his mentor (Match 3) were matched for 16 months at the time of the last interview (October 2009) and the bond between them was very strong. The young person was referred to the programme due to conflict with his mother and difficult behaviour at school. His mentor described how he and his mentee became close enough to talk about school without compromising the fun aspects of their friendship. The pair spent a considerable amount of time in leisure activities, which enabled the young person to develop and hone his aptitude for music and media work. This was further developed through a visit to a local radio station to be interviewed about BBBS (where he was subsequently offered work experience, through being given a role in hosting a prize-giving ceremony for BBBS and taking part in a youth leadership course, both facilitated by the case worker). The BBBS programme therefore gave this young boy a range of non-formal learning experiences, as well as clarity on the direction he wanted his career to go. As a result, his behaviour at school greatly improved and he became very motivated to pursue the career path he had uncovered, even though he still did not like school.

*Young person/Match 3:* Since I've met up with BB, I've got about 400 music tracks out there and they are doing pretty well. So I'm being recognised for my own music and I'm being recognised for being in Big Brothers Big Sisters ... I have done courses up in Dublin, which have been mind-blowing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and if it wasn't for BB I don't know where I'd be today... How do I like school? I don't like it at all. But yes, this year now is going grand. The year after next now, I'm going to try to get into college for sound engineering, so ... keep my head down, keep busy ... definitely without a doubt. If it's not that, I'll be in media studies. I've a backup plan for each one of them.

While positive messages from the mentor in relation to school were important, the real change in this Match 3 case appears to have been driven by the shared enjoyment of pastimes that the young person was passionate about. Rogoff (1990) argues that relational experiences – in which the young person and the more skilled partner focus their attention on a task of interest to the youth – can be a potent spur to emotional development (Spencer, 2006). Similarly, it reflects Deutsch and Spencer's (2009) argument – that the development of a strong affective bond makes it easier and more effective for mentors to help mentees address instrumental goals.

This young person in Match 3 also spoke of how the BBBS case worker had been a great support to him. In his interview, the case worker referred to how the goal of the match was to allow the positive side of the young person's nature to emerge through providing him with opportunities that suited his interests. In keeping with Keller's (2005) conceptualisation of the mentoring relationship as a systemic model, this example shows how the case worker can play a direct role in reinforcing the positive processes occurring in the mentoring relationship, through understanding the young person and connecting him with opportunities that are meaningful to him. Keller's suggestion (*ibid*, p. 183) – that the overall effect of the mentoring intervention on the child's behaviour and well-being may be 'the consequence of establishing a cohesive alliance of three caring adults who collectively support the child's development' – appears to be borne out in this case.

There were also examples in the case studies of non-formal learning or education, whereby young people acquired important skills or knowledge that were likely to be of value in the 'real world' if not in the education system. For example, one parent was aware that her son did not need help with the academic side of school, but needed to become a little more street-wise, something his mentor was also aware of:



*Parent/Match 7:* He's very good at school, very good at his work and all that. But in his attitude, he would be a little bit immature because he got a bit spoilt when the relationship between me and his dad broke down. He was young, like, and he got a bit spoilt. So, my family will say it's my own fault because I babied him too much. But he's starting to grow up now, starting to come on a good bit now. I think he is anyway.

*Mentor/Match 7:* He's not from the country and I'm from the country, so he'd have no understanding of what it's like to grow up in the countryside or to go for a cycle on a bike and to understand what's happening around him in the fields and farms and roads, and to cycle on the left side of the road and not the right. You know, some basic stuff. I suppose it's just broadening his horizons, hopefully.

In a similar vein, a number of mentors referred to the values of self-reliance, hard work and discipline, which they felt were important for the young people to be aware of:

*Mentor/Match 7:* Maybe let him see that there's a bit of direction, a different type of direction than the direction he's currently used to going. That by working extremely hard, you will get nice cars, you will get a nice house, you will get all of these things. And that there's more to football than just ... going over to England and playing football. There's far more to it – just to reach the target of being a footballer, first you've got to train. It starts with the very basics, so he understands some of the principles, little principles like that.

*Mentor/Match 9:* I try and get him to do a bit of work at school and whatever. And if he's devoted to going and playing football, that he's there on time and he's always there. And if he does that, he will get discipline in other ways.

To summarise, a desire to influence the young person's attitude to education was highlighted by all mentors taking part in the research. In cases where the young person was doing fine at school, the mentoring relationship appears to have provided encouragement and reassurance with the normative challenges of school life, such as exams, transition to secondary school and peer relationships. In cases where there were non-normative problems, such as bullying and behavioural issues, the mentor played a role in helping the young person to regulate emotions and address the underlying causes in some instances, resulting in calmer behaviour in school. In one case, there was evidence of impact on the career direction of a young person, which increased his motivation to do well at school. There was also evidence of non-formal learning and development of life skills in young people. The level of impact of the BBBS intervention in the area of education thus varied according to the level of need, while the qualitative data indicate that the strength of the bond between mentor and mentee once again influenced the degree to which outcomes were realised.

## Risk behaviour

Rhodes' (2005) theory of youth mentoring suggests that mentors can offer positive role models and provide a safe place for young people to discuss pressures in relation to the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and also anti-social behaviour. A positive influence from a mentor may act as a counter-balance to negative peer pressure in relation to these behaviours. Most of the young people taking part in the study were in the 10-14 age group and the main type of risk behaviour referred to was 'acting out' or aggressive behaviour at home, school and with peers. While prevention of risk behaviour was not something that was explicitly articulated, it was implicit in the goals of most matches. For example, the mentor in Match 9 was quite aware that his mentee could 'go down a wrong path'. He believed that getting him involved in sport would be a positive thing in his life, which could make him less likely to get involved in anti-social behaviour:

*Case worker/Match 9:* BB's main goal definitely would have been – if you are into sport, you know, you are less likely to get into trouble. Because you've got your energy focused on something else ... and you are busy.

*Mentor/Match 9:* I know that he [LB] can still go this way or that way. I'd like to see him sort out OK for himself.

Similarly, the mentor in Match 2 described how he could see how some of the risk factors in his mentee's community could potentially cause him trouble, despite his and his family's obvious strengths. This mentor saw his match as a means of offering his mentee another perspective and giving him space to clarify his own thoughts and beliefs:

*Mentor/Match 2:* In his life, he's lucky that he seems to have quite a good family background, strong family there, close-knit family. But I would imagine the challenges in his life are who he hangs out with and how much of an influence they are. He seems to be a bit of a leader himself, but at the same time I would imagine he could be quite influenced, you know, so I guess just the decisions he makes in the future. He tells me he has a good grasp on right and wrong and what you should and shouldn't do – from what I see, it looks like he has – but you can see a few things round the edges. There's the potential there to lead on to different paths, I suppose.

The mentor in Match 3 spoke about the young person opening up about other aspects of his life when he was not meeting his mentor. This mentor's approach was non-judgemental – he understood where the young person was coming from and hoped that their match would have opened his eyes to ways of socialising and having fun that do not involve alcohol:

*Mentor/Match 3:* He has slowly starting to admit to me that he goes out drinking and partying and he has massive fights with his mother ... Things like that, things that he wouldn't have told me about at the beginning. There is another example of us getting more [friendly], but so I think the positiveness of doing things without the need for drinking or whatever has been good. I think he's just enjoyed having somebody to have fun with – because I think all of his mates, well they're into music and that's a big thing – but just somebody different and somebody more, I don't want to say older, but I suppose it is older. Somebody older to hang out with and I think he's really really enjoyed that.

Apart from the descriptions of young people being less likely to 'act out', reported earlier, tangible examples of reductions in risk behaviour were not referred to in the interview data. While no examples of young people avoiding risk behaviour or delaying alcohol or drug use were raised in the case studies, it is evident that mentors aimed to act as a positive influence on decisions the young people might make in relation to these issues.

## Parental relationships

According to Rhodes *et al* (2000), mentoring relationships can alleviate some of the tensions and conflicts that arise in parent-child relationships during adolescence by indirectly reducing parental stress. The case study data showed that having a mentor in the life of a young person appeared to affect the young person-parent relationship in a number of ways. By simply being absent from the home for a couple of hours every week, tensions in the relationship could be reduced and the parent could enjoy some 'peace' when their son or daughter was out with their mentor:

*Interviewer:* Do you find it easier at home when LB is out with his BB?

*Parent/Match 2:* I do, yeah, because they're not nagging and they're not playing up at home ... When they're all together, they're kind of fighting and I'm so busy.

*Parent/Match 9:* It's easier because he's not mine for an hour ... and it's giving me a break as a parent. It actually works not just for the child, but for the parents as well ... Plus the fact that both myself and my husband – if we need to talk about something, you know ... it just gives us that hour as well, if we have a discussion that we don't need him to hear ... so it's a help for parents as well as kids.

As mentioned earlier, many of the parents interviewed referred to the fact that they cannot do things with their son or daughter because they also have younger children to look after and other responsibilities. Having somebody available to provide that one-to-one attention was described as taking pressure off the parent–child relationship.

The impact of mentoring on the parent–child relationship was particularly evident in cases where there was conflict between the parent and child. Where there were serious tensions, young people were reportedly happier and 'in better form' because they were looking forward to getting out with their mentor and were less likely to take any frustrations out on their parent:

*Parent/Match 1:* The difference in her is in the last 3 or even 6 months now. There's been a change in her that I didn't think I was going to see for a long time ... Now it's, like, 'Oh Mum, I'm going out to BS today', So she comes home and she goes, 'I'd a great day. I'm off to bed now'. Normally you have to scream at her to go to bed. She just wants to stay up and all that. Now, she just goes to bed, listens to her i-pod or whatever.

At their second interview, the parent and young person in Match 3 both described the difference that BBBS had made to their relationship:

*Parent/Match 3:* Me and him, we could never get on ... It's hard to explain now, but there is a difference since he started the Big Brother.

*Interviewer:* It's taken pressure off you?

*Parent/Match 3:* It has. Like I said, we still argue and that, but it has taken a lot [of pressure off]. Only arguing over stupid things now, whereas it was really bad [before].

*Interviewer:* How do you get on with your parents now? Do you think there is any difference or is it the same?

*Young person/Match 3:* I'd say there would be a good difference actually. Because if I didn't meet up with BB, I'd be in the house annoying them and they would be there annoying me. And I won't be learning what I want to do and I won't be going out doing what I want to do and then I'd be there annoying them. So yes, I think it worked out fine. I think it worked out brilliant actually.

Rhodes (2005) argues that by modelling caring and providing support to the young person, mentors can show that life can be enjoyed and that positive relationships with adults can be achieved. The parent of the young person in Match 9 described how the mentoring relationship had shown her son that positive relationships with adults were possible:

*Parent/Match 9:* It has shown him that he can have fun, that he can talk to other people, you know. He doesn't just have to confide in Mum and Dad ... He can have confidence in somebody else, and the fact that he can get on with grown-ups rather than children, that he can do both. And it's fun, you know. Grown-ups are not always boring, they can be fun too.

The same parent in Match 9 also referred to the support they had received from the BBBS case worker in relation to their other children, indicating that the BBBS programme is a form of family support as well as being a youth development programme:

*Parent/Match 9:* We do talk a lot and she [BBBS case worker] gives me plenty of advice. Not just on LB, but on my other two as well ... I am grateful to BB for everything he has done and certainly to her [case worker] for keeping in contact, not just about LB but with the other two as well. She's been great to have around and at the end of a phone.

Impact on the relationship with siblings did not emerge strongly as a theme. However, there were some indications that relationships with siblings improved somewhat in cases where the young person had been engaged in disruptive behaviour in the home, but had 'calmed down' as a result of their participation in the BBBS programme.

In summary, there were indications across the case studies that relationships between young people and their parents improved as a consequence of their taking part in the mentoring relationship – it gave the parents a break, helped to alleviate tension and conflict in the relationship where such conflict was present and showed the young people that they could 'get on' with other adults. There was also some evidence that BBBS case workers directly supported parents with parenting issues in relation to the child taking part in the programme and with their other children, again reflecting Keller's (2005) systemic model of mentoring. Rhodes' (2005) model of mentoring processes sees improvements in the parental relationship as a mediator, meaning that the intervention works to improve this relationship, which then in turn also works in tandem with the mentoring process to produce tangible outcomes for the young person. Because the parent-child relationship is so critical to a young person's well-being and development, it is possible that greater harmony and less conflict in this relationship also helped to bring about the changes in the areas of education, emotional well-being and risk behaviour described above.

## Peer relationships

Peer relationships are of great importance as a source of support to young people in middle childhood and adolescence. The absence of friendships can be very problematic and lead to poor self-esteem and isolation (Kelly *et al*, 2009; Cotterell, 2007). In the present study, there were many references to improvements in young people's relationships with their peers as a result of participation in the BBBS programme, as predicted by the Rhodes' model of mentoring. This occurred in a number of ways. Firstly, some children made friends directly through the programme, either meeting with other matches or with young people in new activities in which they were taking part:

*Interviewer: And do you have more friends since you met your Big Brother?*

*Young person/Match 9: Yes. I'd have his friends and then his friends bring other kids with them and I get on with them.*

Secondly, as discussed under 'Emotional well-being' (*see above*), the benefits of the mentoring match were described as facilitating many of the young people to either engage in less attention-seeking behaviour or to become more confident, depending on their initial orientation. Where the young person was described as being more confident or 'having come out of' themselves, making friends or getting on better with peers was often a part of this process. Match 8 is a case in point:

*Case worker/Match 8: LS wouldn't really have had many friends of her own age and she seems to have developed friendships now ... with other people her own age, rather than, she used to kind of hang around with her sister a good bit. So, yes, she is building relationships, which is very positive.*

*Parent/Match 8: She's not as quiet or as shy, like.*

*Interviewer: And does she have more friends, do you think?*

*Parent/Match 8: Yes, yes ... she has a crowd of friends around her, which is a lot better than what it was.*

Similarly, for young people who were disruptive and attention-seeking, reportedly calmer behaviour is likely to have made it easier to make friends and develop supportive friendships. For example, the young person in Match 9 (who had to learn to share the ball at football, *see p. 14*) is probably now more likely to find people who want to play football with him. The case study data suggest that the BBBS programme had the effect (1) of increasing some young people's network of friends and (2) of enabling some young people to interact more positively with their peers.

## Summary

This chapter has outlined case study evidence relating to 5 outcome areas – emotional well-being, education, risk behaviour, relationships with parents and relationships with peers. There was evidence that the mentoring process had potential to influence all of these domains, but positive outcomes were more clearly seen in some than in others. There was evidence that young people enjoyed greater emotional well-being throughout their match, with reports of young people being happier, calmer and more confident. The types of support offered by mentors, particularly emotional and esteem supports, appear to have positively influenced young people and brought about these outcomes. Issues related to school and education appeared to feature prominently in relationships and all mentors offered support and encouragement to their mentees with these matters. Apart from behavioural improvements for boys, there were no specific references to outcomes in relation to risk behaviour, although it was an implicit objective in many of the matches. Relationships with parents were reported to be better because the young person was happier and the outlet provided by the mentor appeared to defuse some conflict in the relationship in cases where it was a problem. There were also reports of young people having more friends and being better able to 'get on' with friends, particularly for boys who previously tended to 'act out' a lot and for girls who were shy.

Improvements in the well-being and behaviour of boys was a consistent theme, one that had knock-on effects in all areas including education and their relationships with parents and peers. The strongest outcomes appeared to be for young people, whether boys or girls, who were experiencing family and personal issues (such as bullying, parental break-up and parental conflict) that were having a negative impact on their sense of well-being and behaviour at school. Outcomes were not so evident in cases where the young person did not appear to have such issues, which is not to suggest that they did not benefit from the mentoring relationship, merely that no significant outcomes were referred to in the course of this research.

Outcomes were also stronger where the mentoring relationship was ongoing into its second year and where there was a genuine friendship between the mentor and mentee. The impact of factors such as duration and closeness of the relationship are discussed in Chapter 4.

## 4. Moderating Factors

It is widely accepted that mentoring will not impact on all young people in the same way. A range of dynamics can influence whether or not this intervention will lead to outcomes in particular cases. This chapter focuses on a set of such variables, or moderating factors, that emerged strongly from analysis of the case study data in the present study:

- As highlighted so far throughout this report, the closeness of the mentoring relationship is probably the most important factor in determining whether outcomes will result from the intervention.
- Programme practices are critical in terms of ensuring that a good match is made and that all parties to the match are supported to overcome difficulties and maintain their enthusiasm for the relationship.
- Issues relating to the duration of matches, the frequency of meeting and how the relationship ends are important. Literature in relation to mentoring has highlighted the fact that longer lasting matches are associated with better outcomes and that shorter matches can be harmful. The manner in which matches end is believed to have an influence on whether or not a young person will be negatively affected (Rhodes, 2005) by the experience (this will be discussed with reference to the evidence from this study).
- A fourth factor, identified in the study data and referred to throughout this report, is the level of need of the young person. It is argued that those showing greatest improvement are those demonstrating needs that the mentoring relationship can help to address.
- Finally, the neighbourhood or community context can facilitate or hinder the development of a mentoring relationship in a number of ways.

### Closeness of the mentoring relationship

Rhodes (2005, p. 31) identifies the fundamental starting point for any mentoring relationship as the need for a 'strong inter-personal connection, characterized by mutuality, trust and empathy'. If such a bond does not form, young people and mentors may withdraw from the relationship before it has had any benefits. The most successful relationships are believed to be those in which the mentor allows the young person time to develop trust and does not push them to become close. According to Rhodes (2005, p. 32), a stable friendship is unlikely to emerge immediately, but arises as a result of 'small wins that emerge sporadically over time'. Overall, research supports the position that a strong natural friendship, based on shared interests and characterised by frequent contact, is the foundation for the emergence of other outcomes from mentoring relationships (Zand *et al*, 2009; Blinn-Pike, 2007). Similarly, Cutrona (1996) points out that the closer a person feels towards another, the more comfortable they will be in calling on support from that person.

Freedman (1999) distinguishes between primary and secondary mentoring relationships. Primary relationships are characterised by 'extraordinary commitment, intensity and emotional openness' (*ibid*, p. 66). Such relationships involve a real emotional and reciprocal bond, and take place in contexts both

within and outside the programme. This form of mentoring relationship is rarer, whereas the most common type of relationship that develops is a secondary one. Secondary relationships do not extend beyond the limits of the programme and would probably not continue if the programme support was not there. Freedman concludes that while such secondary relationships are unlikely to be as effective as primary ones, they can still provide useful supports to youth.

Two of the relationships across the 9 case studies in the present research (Matches 1 and 3) could be described as primary. In these relationships, there was a very close bond between the mentor and young person. Parents referred to the mentor as being 'like family' and the young people were very forthcoming about how much the friendship meant to them. The relationships were characterised by strong reciprocity, whereby the mentor learned a lot from the mentee. The approach of the mentors in both of these cases could be described as developmental (Morrow and Styles, 1995), whereby the mentoring relationship was focused on the needs of the young person and the mentor was happy to take the lead from the young person, their interests and requirements. It was clear that a strong sense of trust had developed in these relationships, something that did not emerge immediately but was nurtured by spending time together:

*Young person/Match 3: I got on brilliant with him, yes. He's like one of my mates, get on normal with him. He's a normal guy. He's, like, dead sound.*

*Parent/Match 3: It was like two actual brothers talking and you could tell that. There was just, I don't know, a bond, like. I've seen LS [her older daughter] now with her BS and they were close. But I've never seen it like this [i.e. her son's relationship with his mentor].*

*Parent/Match 1: They are perfect, a perfect match. It couldn't have turned out any better. Honest to God, it couldn't. Delighted. I'm getting married now in August, so I've asked LS does she want BS to go and BS's all excited, you know ... I'd be heartbroken if she had to lose BS. I really would. It would break her heart, but it would upset me as well.*

*Mentor/Match 1: I get on well with LS, so it's going good ... we kind of are relaxed. We do our own thing. Even when we are together, we're kind of ... easy going around each other. That's what it is about – just being comfortable with each other.*

These matches are characterised by a genuine mutuality and sharing of interests. The evidence appears to confirm Rhodes' (2005) theory – that the strongest outcomes to emerge from the programme are from these primary relationships. In both case studies 1 and 3 (see above), the match had a transformative effect on the young person and the benefits from the mentoring relationship appeared to permeate many aspects of their lives. Rhodes argues that the strongest impacts can be seen where the mentor manages to influence the domains of social, emotional, cognitive and identity development of the young person.

The other 7 mentoring relationships within the case studies were of a secondary nature. There is evidence that a very good bond did develop between the mentor and young person in these cases and valuable outcomes did emerge, but the friendship did not appear to have such a transformative effect on the young person as it did in the case of the primary relationships. The relationship may have impacted on one or more of the developmental domains described above. There was evidence of a high degree of empathy, fun and shared interests in these secondary matches, but what appeared to distinguish them from the primary relationships was the lack of a strong sense of mutuality and trust. The establishment of trust within a relationship is a key issue, determining how close that relationship will be and ultimately its effectiveness (Rhodes, 2005). According to Rhodes, a meaningful connection only becomes possible to the extent that the mentee is willing to share his or her feelings and is actively engaged in the relationship. One mentor talked of how she had become closer to her mentee by the time of the second interview, but, as she described, would still not see herself as someone the young person would immediately go to with a problem. Similarly, another mentor spoke of how he enjoyed the programme, but would 'not lose any sleep' if he was not doing it tomorrow. Comments such as these reinforce the fact that this is a relationship formed as part of

a programme and may not survive without the support of that programme. There were indications in some cases that the young person was holding back and not willing to give more to the relationship. As Freedman (1999) says, secondary relationships can be beneficial to young people but primary relationships are the most beneficial.

## Programme practices

The hallmark of the BBBS programme is its structured and formal approach to programme practices (Furano *et al*, 1993; Tierney *et al*, 1995), an approach that is associated with improved outcomes for youth participating in mentoring programmes (Dubois *et al*, 2002). Keller (2005) outlines how programme policies and procedures provide a structure within which mentors, children, parents and case workers make contact initially and then maintain their interactions. The outcome of the intervention is influenced by how effectively these agency practices 'promote the coordinated and cohesive functioning of the system of relationships' (*ibid*, p. 175). To maximise its potential, all four parties in the relationship (mentors, children, parents and case workers) must be happy with the match and receive appropriate support to deal with any issues they may have. Furthermore, good practice guidelines for mentoring programmes indicate that appropriate supports should be provided to ensure that adult volunteers spend time with young people on a regular basis and in ways that foster close emotional bonds. The practices that are associated with these outcomes include training, ongoing staff supervision of matches, and programme events (Cavell *et al*, 2009; DuBois and Neville, 1997). There was evidence from the case study data in the present research that the provision of these supports through the programme was perceived as valuable and helped to ensure that matches overcame difficulties.

## Training

Parra *et al* (2002) found that stronger mentor self-efficacy at the start of the mentoring relationship was associated with greater contact time within the match, greater participation in programme activities and fewer reported problems. Training provided to prepare mentors for their role was described as very helpful by mentors taking part in this study:

*Interviewer:* Looking back to your training, do you think it prepared you well for your role of mentor?

*Mentor/Match 3:* Yes, yes, I think it did. Because the unknowns of it – while I was a bit nervous going up to LB's house to meet him, I tell you I would have been far more nervous if I hadn't had the training ... Yes, training was really excellent, in fairness. It prepared us very well.

## Ongoing staff supervision

Mentors were all appreciative of the supervision and support given to their individual matches. Case workers were described as being 'always there' and willing and able to deal with any issue that arose. Mentors felt comfortable discussing problems or concerns with their case worker. It is clear from the case study evidence that this support was vital in terms of helping matches overcome problems, particularly in the early stages. For example, some matches experienced difficulties in communication, whereby the young person did not return calls or did not turn up for meetings. Programme staff worked with the young person, mentor and parent to handle these issues sensitively. The evidence suggests that the support provided by the case workers was effective in helping mentors to deal with problems or, if contact had fallen off, to re-focus on arranging meetings frequently:

*Mentor/Match 8:* [Case worker] is always there ... If it's something that I'm concerned about, I always know that she is at the end of the phone or if she doesn't answer the phone, she will ring me back as soon as she gets my voicemail. She is great like that. I have never had a problem where I couldn't contact her.



*Mentor/Match 7:* If I needed anything, they [case workers] would be there and I know that. But also even if I didn't call (because we do have the regular contact) ... it's good to have a reminder of why we are here and why we're doing it. And then also anything that needs to be addressed – they are very much on top of it and working towards a solution for everybody, to make it easier for everybody. They're constantly re-evaluating and re-assessing and seeing what new things they can do. So, yeah, excellent support. Over and above what I would have expected.

*Mentor/Match 6:* [Case worker] is very well organised and efficient. I was never left waiting for a response or anything I might have had any problems with. He would regularly check in, just, you know, routinely, to see how things were going and if we needed anything – passes for the cinema or different things like that. It went very well on the contact front.

Young people also spoke very highly of the support they received from their case workers and would have had no hesitation in telling them if something was wrong:

*Young person/Match 3:* If there is something bothering me, I'll tell him straight up. If there's not, there's not ... He's dead easy to talk to. He's a top man, he's 100% a legend ... He's obviously meant to be in with young people and he's made a lot of friends and one of them is me.

*Young person/Match 2:* He's a really nice lad – like, a funny lad, he's likeable.

It is clear that this support from the BBBS case workers is vital to ensure that matches proceed in the manner intended and do not become derailed by issues and misunderstandings. The feedback from all mentors, parents and young people suggests that the approach of case workers is perceived to be excellent – it was described as efficient, thorough, appropriate, proactive, supportive, professional and fun. As mentioned earlier, the support provided by the BBBS staff extends beyond their responsibilities to deliver the programme and that the case workers were also active in supporting families and young people beyond the boundaries of the programme.

## Programme events and activities

Activities for volunteers and young people are believed to be important in terms of sustaining high levels of mentor efficacy (Parra *et al*, 2002). The BBBS Ireland programme regularly organised activities throughout the study period, so that matches could meet up with each other. A weekend trip for matches from all over Ireland to the Delphi Mountain Resort in Co. Mayo, in October 2008, was the biggest event of this nature. There was very positive feedback in relation to these events. It appears that they often gave a boost to the matches as they renewed energy and enabled the mentors and mentees to interact in a group environment. The BBBS programme also organises occasional meetings or events for mentors to meet each other; these were described as beneficial:

*Mentor/Match 4:* I think there was a couple of excursions. I found that they were great. There was one over to Delphi and one to Lough Key Forest Park ... You can see the value of them. It's a good old break for the kids, you know ... Excellent, they're very well organised. The one to Delphi in particular – that was very, very good.

*Mentor/Match 3:* The one thing that I actually really enjoyed or found beneficial was them organising kind of informal things between the volunteers. Yes, I found that very helpful ... because it was nice to talk to other people in the same situation ... I made some good friends through meeting the other volunteers.

Thinking of activities to do when meeting with their mentee was cited as a challenge by many of the mentors taking part in this research and, consequently, the value of having access to Foróige youth facilities as a 'drop-in' for matches emerged strongly as a theme. This enabled the matches to choose from a range of potential activities, depending on the facilities available in each area. Keller (2007) also refers to the

importance of activities in providing a structure from which affective bonds can develop. It is clear from the mentors' quotes that the availability of youth facilities enabled the mentor and young person to develop their relationship in a safe and relaxed environment through engaging in joint activities:

*Mentor/Match 6:* For the last couple of Mondays now, we've had access to upstairs [in a Foróige youth club], which is good because I don't drive and really we're limited in what we can do as regards going around and depending on the weather as well. So it's been good, we've really enjoyed it. We play the Wii, all the games. We did jewellery-making the last night. She's started on a scrapbook.

*Mentor/Match 8:* The new NYP [neighbourhood youth project] is a great facility to have ... We missed it when it closed. It's great in the winter, to have a free service like that, that we can just go and make a cup of tea and play a game of pool or whatever, you know. It's nice to have somewhere to go, so that's a big advantage to have.

*Mentor/Match 3:* It was kind of easier in the summer when the weather was good. We went flying kites down at the beach, kicking soccer balls around, that kind of thing. And then ... we were kind of constrained being inside ... You'd be looking for somewhere to go. But then [the case worker] suggested the [youth café] downtown and it's been absolutely brilliant. Just to have a place where you can go ... You can't go into pubs to play pool or whatever, so you're quite limited in the places you can go. But the [youth café] has got everything there. So now we're going there every week and DJing and listening to music, all that kind of stuff. So he's teaching me now how to DJ and MC. I have to say the [youth café] has been absolutely brilliant.

In summary, it is clear from the research evidence that the support provided by the BBBS project officers and case workers was of great importance in terms of sustaining and developing mentoring relationships. The capacity of mentors to handle the challenges posed by the mentoring relationship was enhanced by the provision of training and timely support from case workers when required. Young people, mentors and parents said that they could talk to programme staff about anything and always found them most supportive. Group activities and outings broadened the social aspect of the intervention and provided new opportunities for interaction between the mentor and mentee, as well as between them and other people. The availability of youth cafés and clubs for matches to use as drop-in facilities was deemed to be extremely beneficial in enabling a broader choice of activities around which the relationship could be focused and developed.

## Setting goals

A final theme to emerge in relation to programme practices is that of setting goals. The first 6 months of the programme are about the friendship between the mentor and mentee, and only after this are any formal goals set for the match. Because the programme in Ireland adopts the positive youth development focus of the American BBBS model, specific goals over and above developing a positive friendship are not part of the approach, unlike the engagement models of mentoring in the UK (Colley, 2003; Pawson, 2006).

The goals set in the BBBS Ireland programme are agreed based on what the young person wants and needs in the belief that if they are given space and time to develop, other issues in their lives will be more easily resolved. The research evidence in this study suggests that the goals often reflected lateral thinking in relation to the issues facing the young person and illustrate how well the mentor and case worker understood the young person. For example, a quote from the case worker in Match 4 (*see below*) illustrates that the goal agreed in this match was around developing the young person's skills at football, which it was believed could help him deal with the bullying he was experiencing. This goal could tap into the young person's motivation and focus on something positive, rather than trying to explicitly address a problem that he was not ready to talk about:

*Case worker/Match 4:* They've [BB and LB] set a goal ... one that they both agreed on, which was different than LB's mother would have chosen. It was just football coaching, spending time together. BB is a football coach, LB is big into football and we felt that was a good goal. LB's mum would have preferred if the goal was set on BB speaking to him about bullying at school. LB wouldn't be very open about

speaking about it – to me, to BB, to anybody outside of the home – that bullying is going on. But he is refraining from doing certain sports at school, like rugby, because he thinks it's an opportunity for the other lads in the class to punish or hit him. But he's been keeping up the football and I think BB wanted to build up his confidence and just impart skills, football skills, to him.

There are many elements associated with the task of making and maintaining a match in the BBBS programme and feedback suggests that these elements all contribute to helping matches to be as strong as they can be. Factors such as careful matching, building mentor capacity, dealing with problems, providing moral support to mentors, enabling support between mentors and attentive goal-setting – all emerged in the research as important in terms of ensuring that matches can develop to a degree that young people can benefit from them.

## Duration of matches, frequency and endings

Mentors and young people are expected to meet for 1-2 hours every week. The case study data indicated that most of the matches endeavoured to meet weekly and most managed to meet every week or fortnight, certainly for the first 6 months or so. There were 2 or 3 matches that appeared to maintain a good degree of consistency over the 2-year duration of the research, whereas the others tended to meet a little less after about 6 months into the match. Issues cropped up for mentors that affected their ability to meet, including family illness and bereavement, work pressures, illness, travel, exams and family events. However, they were generally determined to get back to regular meetings as soon as possible and appeared to regret if they had to postpone a meeting for any reason. Young people were also unable to meet at certain periods due to busy social lives, illness and other issues. In a small number of cases, they did not turn up for their meetings with their mentors because they forgot or opted to do something else at the last minute. Several mentors said that they met their mentee more or less weekly for the first 6 months or so to develop the relationship, but after that the match felt more like a friendship and they did not feel the need to meet quite so often:

*Mentor/Match 2:* At the start, it was every week and that kind of established the relationship. So now, I think he understands that it is OK that we don't meet so often. I do bring it up and I do say it to him, but he doesn't seem bothered, you know. He doesn't seem to mind at all.

*Case worker/Match 3:* They met quite regularly for the first 6 months and then after that, through sickness and through holidays, sickness on both sides, they weren't meeting every week. But the first 6 months really solidified their relationship, so they have quite a strong friendship even though they are not seeing each other every week. They both seem to be happy with that. It's not a case of the volunteer can't meet every week and the young person would like to be meeting every week; it's kind of something that's sorted out among themselves. But the match is going very well.

*Case worker/Match 4:* LB would be involved in snooker and football, so he would have a lot of tournaments, a lot of practice most evenings. BB would have been working two jobs, in particular the last one which prevented them from meeting. But when they do meet up, it's a good response. They're still getting on very well, comfortable in each other's company, but just they haven't set a set time aside to meet. So in that regard, yeah, it hasn't been consistent.

It was not clear from the data how young people felt about meeting a little less, but in some cases it was their own busy schedules that led to this. Quantitative studies have demonstrated a link between consistency of meeting and outcomes from the programme, but this is harder to detect in a qualitative study.

In relation to match duration, the research by Grossman and Rhodes (2002) found that relationships that lasted over a year had the most positive effects, but that young people whose relationships were terminated within 6 months suffered declines in feelings of self-worth and perceived scholastic competence. It was clear from the case study data that matches that were in their second year entered a new phase, with outcomes being more apparent; relationships were firmly established and greater trust had been built up between

the two parties. This is not to suggest that outcomes are not apparent before a year has passed, rather that outcomes appear to be stronger and more likely to produce a lasting effect when the match is going for longer. Mentors are asked to commit to the BBBS programme for a minimum of one year, at which point they can review their position and decide if they wish to continue. By the time of the final case study interviews in the present research, 3 of the 9 matches had ended (see Table 1). One had ended before a year had passed, one ended after 15 months and one ended after 16 months. All 3 were ended by the mentors, in two cases (Matches 3 and 6) due to changes in personal circumstances and in the other (Match 7) because the mentor realised he had too many other commitments.

In the case of Match 3, the match ended after 16 months because the mentor had to move abroad for work reasons; the young person understood and both plan to keep in touch and meet up when he returns home for visits. According to his mother, her son is happy about keeping in touch with his mentor, but does miss him:

*Mentor/Match 3: When I'm coming back, and I plan on coming back a lot, I'll meet up with him [LB] ... It's not a case of 'right, job done, move on', you know.*

*Parent/Match 3: BB is keeping in contact with him [LB], so he's happy with that. But you can tell he does miss him. He does. Until he went, they were getting on like real brothers, the two of them.*

Match 6 ended after 15 months due to a change in the mentor's personal circumstances. According to the case worker, the young person and parent both understood, and there was phone contact between them before the match formally ended. The young person sent a card and gift to the mentor. She is hoping to be re-matched through the programme.

The mentor in Match 7 withdrew 9 months into the match due to having too many other commitments. He told the young person himself, who was quite disappointed as the following quote from the case worker suggests. His parent was also hoping that he would be re-matched through the programme.

*Case worker/Match 7: I rang the mum up about 2 weeks afterwards to see how LB was and she said he was fine, that ... he was OK. She said he will miss meeting up with BB. The mum understood about BB ... I suppose there's nothing you can do because it's voluntary and that's always in the back of your head, you know – they can decide to opt out at any time and there's not a thing you can do, unfortunately.*

The young person Match 7 had been very much enjoying the mentoring relationship and appeared to be finding it a support in the context of pressure in his life. There is a possibility that he could have felt let down by the early ending of the match. In the other two cases (Matches 3 and 6), the ending is likely to have been eased by the fact that the reason for closure was beyond the control of the mentor and/or the match had lasted for in excess of one year. These cases illustrate that, because relationships are at the heart of the BBBS programme, there is a risk that they will not work out or will end early. This is one of the main risks of the programme, particularly where young people who are vulnerable or have been damaged by previous relationships may potentially be hurt by the ending of another relationship. However, evidence from the case studies demonstrates that the programme handles the ending as sensitively as possible in order to minimise any disappointment for the young person.

## Young person's needs

The case study data suggest that the BBBS programme is most effective for young people who are dealing with personal issues, such as bullying, lack of confidence, anger and behavioural issues. In the small number of cases where the young person did not have major issues, there appeared to be less scope for the mentoring relationship to make a difference. While the mentoring relationship no doubt acted in these cases to boost the processes of social, emotional, identity and cognitive development described by Rhodes (2005), it could be argued that there is less justification for intervention in these cases than in the others, where the intervention could clearly assist with specific problems.

A classification developed by Hauser and Bowlds (1993) is useful in illustrating the different types of stressors that young people may experience in their lives and the potential role for a programme such as BBBS:

- **Normative events** are experienced by all young people, such as puberty, change of school aged 11-13 and peer pressure. All young people have to confront these issues, usually within a predictable timescale.
- **Non-normative events** affect some young people and can occur at any time. These include illness, injury, parental break-up, breakdown in friendships, parental unemployment and bereavement.
- **Daily hassles** are relatively minor in scale, but may become significant if there are enough of them or if they combine with normative/non-normative stressors.

The case study data outlined in this report suggest that the BBBS mentoring programme has most impact in cases where young people are dealing with non-normative events, as well as the normative events and daily hassles that affect all young people.

## Community context

Supportive community contexts are believed to have a positive impact on the success of the mentoring relationship (Rhodes, 2005). A number of issues in this regard were raised in this study's interviews. Firstly, matches for young people in rural areas were often difficult due to lack of transport, either because the mentor did not have a car or because the mentee's parent did not drive or have time to drop them off or collect them. Another issue was that there can be longer distances for the mentor to travel, which increases the total meeting time required. The mentor in Match 8 described her experience and believes it is something that may deter potential volunteers; it may also have the effect of meaning that matches cannot meet as often since the time commitment for each meeting is greater when commuting time is included:

*Mentor/Match 8: When I initially signed up to do BBBS, I was told that it was a commitment of an hour a week. That may be so in more urban areas, but where I am down here, in this part of the country, it takes me 30 minutes to get to LS, so it's unrealistic to tell perspective Bigs [mentors] that they will only be spending an hour. I spend no less than 2½, possibly 3 hours with LS, which is longer than I envisaged it being at the start. And a lot of it is logistics because I have to drive 30 minutes to get to where LS lives and then if we want to do something back in town, it's another 30-minute drive back into town. Her mother doesn't drive; there isn't a direct bus route that she could meet me. So it's a bigger commitment that way. I have no problem doing it, it's fine. But I'd say it could be off-putting for other Bigs, potential Bigs.*

A second issue identified, which again relates mostly to rural areas, is the lack of activities for matches to undertake. Urban-based mentors and young people can also find it difficult to constantly think of things to do, but at least they have access to a range of facilities including sports, cafés, cinemas, youth projects and shops. In rural areas, the options are more limited and often necessitate driving to a larger town. It is an issue that can make the match a little slower to develop and which can put a strain on both parties, particularly in the first 3 months of the match when the mentee is not allowed to visit the mentor's home. A third issue in terms of neighbourhood ecology is again particularly pertinent in rural areas, but can also occur in urban areas. There were two cases where the mentor knew the mentee's family and vice versa, due to the fact that they both lived in the same small towns. In both cases, the mentor was aware of issues in the mentee's family and thus came to the match with some pre-conceived ideas about the mentee's life (unlike other matches where the mentor is told nothing about the mentee except very basic information such as age and interests). In one case, it had the effect of the mentor not wishing to engage with the family and keeping his dealings strictly with the young person; he also referred to the fact that people were wondering 'what he was doing with this young fella'. This points to the fact that it is harder for matches to have privacy and anonymity in rural towns than in larger urban centres. Considering that other mentors said that they were glad they did not know much about the young person's family because they could treat them as an individual in their own right, there is a risk that in cases where the mentor knows about the family, the young person is at a slight disadvantage. The young person may also be somewhat embarrassed if they

think that the mentor has heard gossip about his or her family, a factor that could potentially undermine the concept of the match as 'a space' for children. On the other hand, the BBBS programme has to make the best matches it can from the pool of available mentors. Indeed, the concept of formal mentoring is based on the practice of informal mentoring, whereby young people are mentored by people who know them and care about them. In this context, the prior knowledge of the mentor is not a major issue, but is worth considering in each case.

## Summary

There are a range of factors that influence or 'moderate' the effects of this intervention on young people. The closeness of the relationship is a key factor in determining the degree to which outcomes will accrue from mentoring relationships. Programme practices are of great importance in enabling matches to overcome problems, in building the efficacy of mentors and in providing safe places for matches to meet. Frequency of meeting appears to lessen approximately 6 months into the match, but it is difficult to say whether this significantly impacts on outcomes. In keeping with Rhodes' (2005) theory, matches lasting for 12 months or more appear to be the most beneficial. It is argued that the intervention is most beneficial for young people with personal issues, such as behavioural problems, bullying and lack of confidence. The research also shows that matches in rural areas can find it more difficult to find activities to do and to protect their privacy.

These factors are mostly included as 'moderators' in Rhodes' model of mentoring (*see Appendix 2*). Other moderators identified by Rhodes did not emerge so strongly in this research. For example, age did not emerge as having a significant impact on the outcomes from the intervention, probably because the age range of young people in this study (10-14, with an average age of 12) is narrower than would traditionally be the case in mentoring programmes. While gender was a factor, and has been referred to throughout the report, the young person's needs and the closeness of the mentoring relationship were believed to be more likely to influence outcomes than gender.



## 5. Conclusions

This chapter summarises the overall findings of the study and places them in the context of previous research findings on mentoring.

Eccles and Gootman (2002) in their US study of *Community programs to promote youth development* conclude by saying, 'Many who study adolescent development and work with young people have increasingly come to believe that being problem-free is not fully prepared. Beyond eliminating problems, one needs skills, knowledge and a variety of other personal and social assets to function well during adolescence and adulthood. Thus a broader, more holistic view of helping youth to realise their full potential is gaining wider credence in the world of policy and practice'.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) mentoring programme is based on the rationale that having a caring adult friend can help to build positive assets in young people, enabling them to have a positive sense of self and of their future, a commitment to learning, positive values and social competencies of making friends, planning, making decisions and resisting negative behaviour (extract from *BBBS Ireland Service Delivery Manual*, p. 2). This orientation clearly indicates that BBBS adopts what is known as a positive youth development approach. Programmes taking this approach aim to promote the general social and emotional well-being of young people in the belief that this can help prevent problem behaviour. A major review of such programmes was undertaken in the USA by the National Research Council/Institute of Medicine in 2002 (Eccles and Gootman, 2002). The review, entitled *Community programs to promote youth development*, identified a set of personal and social assets that increase the healthy development and well-being of adolescents and facilitate successful transition from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. These assets are physical development; intellectual development (including critical thinking, school success, life skills); psychological and emotional development (including good coping skills, confidence in one's personal efficacy and prosocial values); and social development (including connectedness to parents, peers and other adults, sense of social integration). The contexts in which young people live their lives are more likely to provide developmental assets if they provide opportunities to experience supportive relationships and have good emotional and moral support; exposure to positive morals and values; links with their communities; and physical and psychological safety and security. The review concluded that community programmes can expand the opportunities for youth to acquire personal and social assets, and that youth who spend time in communities rich in developmental opportunities experience less risk and show higher rates of positive development.

This model of working with young people can also be considered as fitting with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model for human development. This approach places the child at the centre of analysis and asserts that children's welfare must be understood in terms of how they experience their lives and what they see as giving them quality (Casas, 1997). Furthermore, the ecological approach emphasizes that children can and do change their environment (Muuss, 1996, p. 337) and that the reality as perceived by children and young people is what matters, rather than the objective reality.



Irish policy for children and young people favours a 'whole child' approach, as reflected in the National Children's Strategy (Department of Health and Children, 2000) and *The Agenda for Children's Services* (OMC, 2007). The need for a child-centred policy was reiterated by the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (2009), which recommended that child care policy should be child-centred and that services should be tailored to the developmental, educational and health needs of the particular child.

The aim of this evaluation was to explore if and how the BBBS youth mentoring programme impacts on young people in Ireland. The quantitative strand of this research, published in Report 1 of the study's series, indicated that young people with a mentor had higher levels of hope, or optimism, than young people without a mentor and that the intervention was successful in improving young people's sense of being supported by parents, siblings, friends and other adults. The present qualitative research was undertaken to explore the types of support that mentors provide to young people and to identify the outcomes that are perceived to result from mentoring relationships from the perspectives of young people, parents, mentors and case workers. As described in the methodology (*see Chapter 1*), a total of 65 interviews were held with all the stakeholders (young people, parents, mentors and case workers) in the 9 mentoring relationships studied as part of this research project.

Evidence from the case studies highlights the many ways in which mentors support young people through the BBBS programme:

- **Practical support** took the form of facilitating young people to do things, go places and meet people they may otherwise not have had the opportunity to do. By offering this form of support, mentors introduced young people to a broader social network and made connections for them.
- Mentors were seen to offer **emotional support**, through listening to and empathising with the young person and acting as a 'sounding board' for daily events and challenges. Some young people talked openly to their mentors and sought support in addressing personal issues, while others did not. This variation illustrates how mentoring relationships can be used as a resource to help young people to cope in whatever way they feel comfortable
- Positive feedback from the mentor to the young person in relation to their achievements and abilities can be seen as a form of **esteem support**. The reciprocity evident in many of the relationships is also likely to have enhanced the young person's belief that they have something positive to offer others.
- Mentors were also seen as being able to offer **advice and guidance** in a way that would make it accepted, or acceptable, by the young person.

The evidence suggests that the closer the relationship, the more seamlessly these forms of support can be transmitted, thus reflecting the consensus in the mentoring literature regarding the importance of relationship quality (Keller, 2005, Rhodes, 2005). Outcomes for young people were highlighted across the domains of education, emotional well-being and relationships with family and peers, with less evidence of impact in the area of risk behaviour.

Overall, the findings suggest that an improved sense of well-being is an outcome from the BBBS programme for children and young people, and that this sense of well-being can help to build the foundation for the emergence of positive or 'harder' outcomes in domains such as education and risk behaviour. In this study, all of the 9 young people were described, or described themselves, as 'happy' and appeared to derive great enjoyment from their match. Some young people with behavioural, emotional and relationship issues were reported to be 'calmer' and more in control of their behaviour at home and in social settings. There were also reports by parents and case workers of increased 'confidence' in some young people, particularly girls who had previously been shy or withdrawn. McAuley *et al* (2010), writing about children's views of what constitutes child well-being, highlight that children are concerned with what is happening in the here and now; the authors refer to research by Fattore *et al* (2009) that showed that children understood well-being as arising from their significant relationships and their emotional life. In the present study, the reports from young participants about their being happier, getting on better with their parents and friends, and having a more positive sense of self – all together suggest that they feel an enhanced sense of well-being.

A number of themes were evident in relation to outcomes:

- The **quality or closeness of the relationship** between the mentor and young person was the foundation for the emergence of outcomes for the young person. This finding reflects the consensus in mentoring literature that the development of a close and trusting bond is key to the success of the intervention (Rhodes, 2005; Philip and Spratt, 2007; Keller, 2007).
- Also in keeping with the mentoring literature, the strongest outcomes were in **matches that were close and well-established**. For example, outcomes in relation to education were more apparent at the time of the second interviews, when most matches were established for a year or more.
- The strongest outcomes appeared to be for young people, whether boys or girls, who were **experiencing family and personal issues** (such as bullying, parental break-up and parental conflict) that were having a negative impact on their sense of well-being and behaviour at school. The matches in which these young people formed a close bond with their mentor and where the match lasted for a year or more showed most evidence of positive benefits for the young person.

Report 1 on the implementation of the BBBS Ireland mentoring programme showed that it is being implemented to a high standard, with strong fidelity to the BBBS programme model. The case study data in the present study have also shown that these programme practices are of great importance in enabling young people and their mentors to develop close relationships. The evidence indicates that staff are perceived very positively by young people, their parents and mentors.

These findings are of interest from a policy perspective because they illustrate that the BBBS mentoring programme is capable of creating a space for vulnerable children and young people where their own needs can be prioritised and that doing so can improve the quality of their lives. Moss and Petrie (2002) argue that many professional services for children and young people are governed by predetermined objectives regarding what they need. Similarly, Parton (2006) believes that large caseloads and a concern with the management of risk in children's services mean that there is little time for listening and participation, and consequently little scope to accommodate issues that are 'irrational, emotional and expressive'. Furthermore, research has shown that professionals are not the people children choose to talk to when in difficulty because they fear they will not keep things confidential: Hallett *et al* (2003) found that young people preferred to discuss their problems in informal networks rather than with people from formal agencies because they feared that personal knowledge about them would be spread around. Parton (2006) argues that this poses a serious challenge to children's services, which are committed to integration and sharing of information. He believes that 'issues around trust and confidentiality are absolutely key to ensuring that the way children's services develop do not have the impact of disempowering and alienating children and young people' (*ibid*, p. 182). As a counter to the adult-centred vision of what children need, Parton (2006) and Moss and Petrie (2002, p. 106) recommend the concept of 'children's spaces', where children's own agendas can be key, where children are seen as agents of their own lives and where they can be seen as co-constructors, with adults, of knowledge, identity and culture. Similarly, Cooper *et al* (2003) argue for 'confidential spaces', where children, parents and professionals can engage in dialogue and negotiation and explore complex issues.

The case study data in the present research suggest that the BBBS programme can create such spaces for young people. Young people were seen to trust in and open up to their case workers and mentors to varying degrees, while the structure of the programme allows time and space for the young person to become comfortable and pursue their own interests, needs and objectives. As highlighted earlier, having this space for the stakeholders in the relationship to get to know and understand the young person facilitated lateral thinking in relation to creative ways to address problems in their lives. The non-directive goal-setting aspect of the programme is important in this regard because it ensures that goals set are identified and agreed to by the young person. Young people are given the privacy to develop the relationship with their mentor on their own terms, but parents are not alienated, which is vital given the important role that parents play in young people's lives. Young people and their families

are also supported by case workers to access voluntary and statutory supports likely to be of benefit to them. Reflecting the 'whole child' and children's rights approaches, the BBBS programme recognises that children and young people have agency (ability to take control) and can, and do, make a positive contribution to their own welfare as well as that of others (Parton, 2006; Brannen and Moss, 2003).

This qualitative research has also illustrated that aggregate quantitative measures are somewhat of a blunt instrument in assessing the impact of a generalised positive youth development intervention such as mentoring. The strength of this form of mentoring is that it can take each young person where he or she 'is at' and thus the outcomes will vary according to needs. For example, the case study data show that some young people liked school, whereas others did not – therefore, impact on the standardised School Liking measure can only meaningfully occur in cases where there is a dislike of school. The intervention appears to give all young people a better sense of well-being in that they feel better supported and are more hopeful, but the specific outcomes beyond this will be harder to detect on an aggregate basis.

The findings of this Report 2 and those of the randomised control trial and implementation strands of the research (Report 1) are integrated in Report 3, which provides a short summary report of the overall evaluation of BBBS Ireland and offers some recommendations for practice and policy.

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# Appendix 1: Interview Schedules

## YOUNG PERSON

### 1st Interview

#### Young person and their family, home and school life:

- Can you tell me about your family and your home, who you live with, where you live, etc? (*Explore with the young person the relationships they have with parents, siblings and extended family members and friends.*)
- Any pets?
- What are your favourite things to do at home?
- Do you have any sports, hobbies or music that you enjoy?
- What class are you in at school?
- Can you tell me about your school and the subjects you like?
- Do you have friends at school? What do you and your friends like to do?
- What's the best thing about school? Is there anything you don't like about school?

#### Young person and the BBBS programme:

- So how did you get to hear about BBBS?
- What did you think of BBBS when you heard about it first?
- What do you think having a Big Brother or Big Sister (BB/BS) will be like?
- Has anyone that you know (*e.g. a sibling/friend*) ever had a BB/BS?
- Whose idea was it for you to get a BB/BS? Did you make the decision on your own or did you talk to someone about it?
- Did you have any worries about getting a BB/BS? Were you nervous, excited, curious?
- Tell me a bit about \_\_\_\_\_, your case worker?
- Did you know them from before?
- How did your case worker explain BBBS to you? Did you understand what having a BB/BS was about?
- Is \_\_\_\_\_, your case worker easy to talk to? Can you ask them questions about your BB/BS if you need to?
- Do you do other things with \_\_\_\_\_, your case worker?
- Do you go to any clubs? Do you enjoy the club?

#### Young person and their mentor:

- How long have you known your BB/BS?
- Can you tell me what your first meeting with your BB/BS was like? How did you feel before you met them? What were you thinking about?
- Can you tell me about the sorts of things that you do together or the things that you plan to do together? Do you help decide? Do you like doing that?
- Have you ever done these sorts of things with any other adult? (*e.g. extended family, neighbour, youth worker in a club, etc*)
- What do you like about having a BB/BS? What's the best thing?
- Is there anything that you don't like about having a BB/BS? What's the thing that you like the least?
- Can you tell me about a time with your BB/BS that you really enjoyed or a time where you got on really well with them? (*depends on how long they have been meeting*)
- How long do you think that you and your BB/BS will keep seeing each other for?
- Do you think other kids/young people would enjoy having a BB/BS?

## 2nd Interview

### Young person and their family, home and school life:

- How are things going at home with your family and friends?
- How is school at the moment? What are you enjoying about school? What are you good at? Are there any things that you do not enjoy so much? Or things that you find hard or difficult?
- Generally, how are things going for you at the moment?

### Young person and the BBBS programme:

- How are you getting on with \_\_\_\_\_, your case worker?
- How often do you see them?
- What sort of things do you talk about together? Can you give an example?
- Do you feel like you can talk to them about your BB/BS?
- What's the best thing about \_\_\_\_\_, your case worker?
- Is there anything you wish was different about them?

### Young person and their mentor:

- Can you tell me the sorts of things that you do with your BB/BS? Where do you go?
- How often do you meet up? Is it often enough or would you like to meet more often/less often?
- Whose job is it to organise when you meet up? Who rings who?
- Do you mind if you have to ring them?
- Who decides what to do? Is that an easy or a hard thing to do? Do you like deciding? Or do you prefer if they do it?
- Have you ever missed a session with your BB/BS? What happened?
- Is being with your BB/BS the same or different as being with other adults? In what ways?
- Can you tell me about a time when you got on well with your BB/BS? What was that like?
- Are there ever times when you think you don't get on so well with your BB/BS?
- How long do you think you will keep seeing your BB/BS for?
- Do you think other young people should have a BB/BS? Why?
- What would you tell them about it? What are the best things/the least best things about it?
- Is your life any different since you have a BB/BS?



## 1st Interview

### About you:

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself, home life, work, interests, hobbies, etc?
- Can you tell me how you heard about the BBBS programme? Why did you decide to become a BB/BS?
- Did you have any concerns about becoming a BB/BS? What were they? Did you discuss it with anyone? (Would you have liked to discuss it with anyone?)
- Do you have any experience with young people, either formal or informal?
- What do you think the role will entail? What sorts of things do you see yourself doing with your Little Brother or Little Sister (LB/LS)?
- What sorts of skills do you think you will need?
- Have you ever been involved in voluntary work before?
- When you were young, did you have an adult who you would have viewed as a mentor? Can you tell me a bit about them and what they did/any impact they had on you?

### The mentoring relationship:

- Can you tell me about your first meeting with your LB/LS? Were you nervous/looking forward to it? What did you do?
- Can you tell me about the type of things that you do with your LB/LS? Who decides? Do you mind who decides?
- How much time do you spend together on a weekly basis? Is it enough? Would you like more/less?
- Are there things that you have found easy about being a mentor? Are there things that you have found difficult about being a mentor?
- What kind of support do you think you are offering your LB/LS at the moment?
- Do you think you have things in common with your LB/LS?
- Are there things about you and your LB/LS that are very different?
- What do you think will be the challenges ahead? How do you think you will manage any challenges?
- What do you hope to offer your LB/LS during the course of the relationship?
- What do you hope to get out of this relationship or experience?

### BBBS programme and case worker:

- How did you find the recruitment process? Can you tell me about it? Were you fully informed about the programme and what the role would entail? Were you clear about what was expected of you? Were there opportunities to ask questions or to seek clarification?
- Was the process time-consuming from beginning to end? Were you kept up to date about how your application was progressing?
- Can you tell me about the training you received? Has it been useful? Did it have any impact on your decision to become a mentor? Did it make you more interested? Or did it raise any issues for you? Has it been useful in your relationship so far?
- Looking back on the training you received, are there any other areas you think might be useful for mentors in the future?
- Can you describe the relationship you have with your case worker? Are they available/supportive/useful? What sort of things do you talk about?
- Do you feel that you get enough support from your case worker? Are there things that you would like more support with or less support with? Who contacts who? Do you feel that you could contact them if you needed to?
- Do you think that you were informed enough about your LB/LS before you started meeting with them?

## 2nd Interview

### The mentoring relationship:

- Can you tell me how the relationship with your LB/LS has been going so far?
- What sort of things have you been doing together?
- Has there been any time that you have shared with your LB/LS that has been really good? Can you describe it?
- Has there been any time that has been difficult? Can you describe what happened?
- Can you tell me about the type of support you feel you are offering your LB/LS at the moment? (*information/advice/emotional*)
- How do you think the relationship is progressing?
- What do you find is the best thing about being a mentor?
- What do you find is the biggest challenge?
- You told me in the first interview that \_\_\_\_\_ was your motivation to mentor. Is this still the case?

### BBBS programme and case worker:

- Do you have regular contact with your case worker? Who makes contact? What sort of things do you discuss?
- Would you describe it as a supportive relationship? If so, why?
- Do you feel that the match is managed well by the case worker?
- Are there any changes you could suggest that would be useful to other mentors in the future?
- Have you met with other mentors?
- Have you had any additional training? Would you like more training?
- Looking back on your training, do you think that it prepared you for the role?

### Questions for mentors where matches had ended by the time of the 2nd interview:

- How long did the match last?
- Can you describe what the relationship was like? What were the challenges/strengths?
- Why do you think it ended early?
- Were you disappointed/did you try to keep the relationship going? Can you describe what the obstacles/barriers were?
- Was the case worker supportive during this time? Do you think anything else could have been done to keep the relationship going?
- Would you consider being a mentor again?

# PARENT/GUARDIAN

## 1st Interview

### BBBS programme and case worker:

- Can you tell me how you heard about BBBS?
- Did you know the case worker before? Had your child (*or their siblings*) any involvement with the case worker or other Foróige staff previously?
- What do you think the BBBS programme is about?
- Why did you think it was a good thing for your son/daughter to get involved in?
- Who made the decision to get a BB/BS? Did you both discuss it?
- Can you tell me a bit about what happened in the beginning, before your son/daughter got a BB/BS? When did you meet with the case worker to talk about it?
- Do you think you were kept up to date with things? Did you feel involved in the process?
- Can you contact the case worker if you need to?
- Is there anything that concerns you about your child having a BB/BS? If you have other children, what do they think about it?
- Have you been involved in any reviews? Can you tell me about what happens?

### Overview of child–parent/guardian relationship and family situation:

- Can you tell me about the relationship you have with your child?
- How do you get on together? What sort of things do you enjoy doing together? Are there things that are difficult between you?
- Can you tell me a bit about your home situation?
- How do they get on with their siblings and other family members?
- How do you think they are getting on at school?
- Why do you think that having a BB/BS is a good idea for your child?
- What do you think or hope your child will get from this experience?

### The mentoring relationship:

- Can you tell me about the first meeting your son/daughter had with their BB/BS? What happened? Did you talk about it together? Were they nervous/excited? What were you feeling about it?
- Did you meet the BB/BS? Would you like to/not like to?
- Had you any involvement in arranging the meeting? (*e.g. drop-off*)
- Do you ever have to encourage your child to arrange or attend a meeting with their BB/BS?
- At this early stage, do you think the experience has had an effect on your child?
- How do you feel about it at the moment?

## 2nd Interview

### The mentoring relationship:

- How do you think your son/daughter has been getting on with their BB/BS? Are they enjoying it?
- Have they been meeting on a regular basis?
- Do you talk about it much together? What sort of things do you talk about?
- Have you had to organise any parts of it? Or encourage them to meet with their BB/BS?
- Have you had any contact with the BB/BS? How did that go?
- What do you think your child enjoys most about meeting with their BB/BS? Is there anything they don't enjoy about having a BB/BS?

### **BBBS programme and case worker:**

- Has the case worker kept you up to date with what's going on? How do they do this?
- Can you tell me about the reviews? What happens? Are they useful/not useful?
- Has your child having a BB/BS been what you expected? Is there anything that is different than you thought it would be like?
- Do you feel included in what goes on? Is there anything that you would like more information on?
- Have you ever had to contact the case worker about anything in relation to the programme? Can you tell me about that and what happened?

### **Parent/guardian and their son/daughter:**

- How do you think your son/daughter is getting on generally over the past few months?
- How has your relationship been with your son/daughter over the past few months?
- Do you see any difference since they started seeing their BB/BS?
- What about school, how are they getting on at school?
- Generally, how are they getting on at home? With their siblings? Other family members?

### **If the match has ended:**

- How long did the relationship last?
- Why do you think it has finished?
- Was your child disappointed that it didn't last as long as was expected?
- Were you disappointed that it didn't last?
- Do you think that your child got any benefit from having a BB/BS? Was the fact that the relationship ended early harmful to your child in any way, do you think?
- Would you recommend BBBS to your other children/other families, even though your child's match ended early?

## **CASE WORKER**

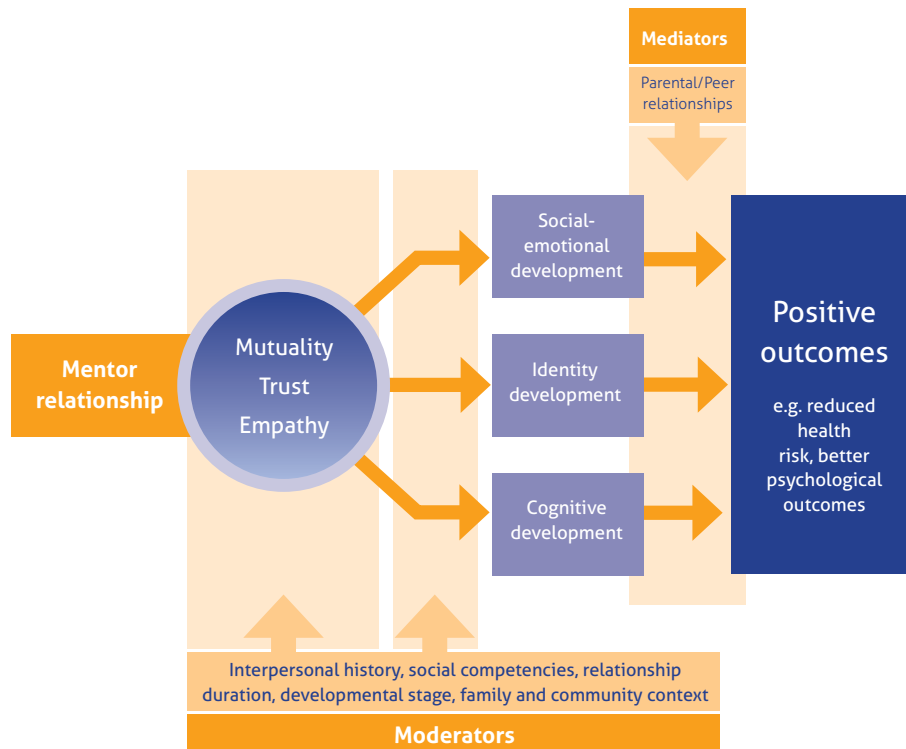
### **1st Interview**

- Why was this young person chosen for the BBBS programme? On what basis was the match made?
- How is it going so far?
- Have any issues arisen?
- What do you feel the young person is gaining from it?

### **2nd Interview**

- Can you please talk me through how the match is going so far?
- Have any issues arisen?
- What do you feel the young person is gaining from it?

## Appendix 2: Rhodes' model of youth mentoring – 'Pathways of mentoring influence'



Source: Rhodes (2005)



