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MENTORING ADULT OFFENDERS: A SILVER BULLET?

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Outline of the paper

- ◆ Background: the rise of mentoring, the perceived advantages of mentoring and mentoring as a concept (EW)
- ◆ Findings from our three evaluations of mentoring schemes for adult offenders (AH)
- ◆ Concluding comments (EW)

Introduction

- ◆ Long history but rapid growth in mentoring in UK and elsewhere across all areas of public policy
- ◆ Upwards of 10,000 projects in UK (Mentoring and Befriending Foundation , 2010)
- ◆ Found in all areas of criminal justice, especially youth justice
- ◆ Examples with adult offenders:
 - ◆ Bail
 - ◆ (Ex) prisoners
 - ◆ Community sentences
 - ◆ Offender management

Explaining the rise of mentoring

- ◆ Fits with policy agendas (New Labour/Coalition)
 - ◆ Tackling social exclusion
 - ◆ Promotion of marketisation
 - ◆ Enhancing the role of the voluntary sector
 - ◆ Civil renewal/active citizenship/Big Society
 - ◆ Need to reduce public spending and manage growing demand for criminal justice services
- ◆ Inherent appeal: 'strong face validity'
- ◆ High expectations : seemingly straightforward solution to complex problems

The perceived advantages of mentoring

- ◆ Helps adult offenders comply with conditions /requirements, access services and supports desistance
- ◆ Continuity of support throughout and beyond the criminal justice process
- ◆ Cost-effective
- ◆ Value-added (additional resources to plug gaps in provision)
- ◆ Support /assistance is qualitatively different from that provided by paid staff

Conceptualising mentoring

- ◆ Lack of a universal definition but some consensus re: defining features/typical practice
 - ◆ One-to-one relationship, freely entered into and based on trust
 - ◆ Mentor is typically a volunteer who uses their experience to act as a positive role model to support an individual to achieve specified goals over an extended period of time
 - ◆ Typically underpinned by a 'social deficit' model
- ◆ Mentoring with adult offenders problematises accepted wisdom with respect to mentoring

	Statutory Project	Voluntary project	Bail Scheme
Target group	Short-term prisoners	All prisoners	Bailed defendants
Management	Probation	Two VCS agencies	VCS in partnership with two other VCS
Mentoring	Contract	In house	Hybrid
No. of agencies	4	2	1
Referrals	100%	Voluntary	100%
Paid staff	Yes	No	Yes
Volunteers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Matching	With organisation not mentor	With mentor	With mentor
In prison	No	Yes	N/A
Continuity through the gate	No	Yes	N/A
Duration	12 weeks	Unlimited	Time on scheme

Defining mentoring

- ◆ One to one relationship
- ◆ 'Advise, assist and befriend'
- ◆ Positive role model
 - ◆ More experienced mentors the less experienced
 - ◆ Older mentoring the young
 - ◆ Mentors often young
- ◆ Matching mentors and mentees
 - ◆ Gender and ethnicity
 - ◆ Mismatch between mentors and mentees
 - ◆ Risk issues
 - ◆ Peer mentoring
 - ◆ Offenders
- ◆ Confidentially
- ◆ Informed consent
- ◆ Volunteers
- ◆ Time limits

Expectations gap

- ◆ Small numbers
- ◆ Limited contact
- ◆ Small number of highly valued mentoring relationships
- ◆ Befriending rather than mentoring
 - ◆ Meetings
 - ◆ Lacked a clear focus
 - ◆ Social occasions
 - ◆ Limited structured activities
- ◆ Short-lived
- ◆ No exit strategy
- ◆ Little evidence of tangible outcomes

Explaining the expectation gap

- ◆ Individual issues
 - ◆ Realities of individual' lives
 - ◆ Difficulties of keeping in contact
 - ◆ Lack of motivation/coercion
- ◆ Structural issues
 - ◆ Set up time
 - ◆ Gap between demand and supply
 - ◆ Challenges of recruiting, training and working with volunteers
 - ◆ Existing commitments
 - ◆ Challenges of geography
 - ◆ Challenges of working with criminal justice agencies
 - ◆ How to keep mentors interested.
- ◆ Measuring effectiveness
 - ◆ Performance measure - take up
 - ◆ Lack of clarity about what constitutes an effective outcome
 - ◆ Poor record keeping

Where next for mentoring?

- ◆ Attempting to narrow the gap between expectations and practice?
- ◆ Developing the evidence-base?
- ◆ Reflecting on the role of mentoring in criminal justice?
- ◆ Developing its theoretical underpinnings? The Good Lives Model (Tony Ward and Shadd Maruna)