Evaluation of C.E.L.L.S.: Interventions with Young People: Process and Impact.

Ester Ragonese, Emma Curd and Georgia

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Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that the process of crime prevention is a long and slow one but that failure to access appropriate, and timely advice, guidance and access to services can and does result in people, and especially the young, being caught in a 'revolving door' situation where people return to offending/prison again and again as a cycle of offending is perpetuated.

This report evaluates the work of [The Choices, Education, Lifelong Learning Skills (C.E.L.L.S) Project](#), a crime prevention focussed programme that works with children and young people in Merseyside who are at risk of engaging in or are already involved in crime. The following report explores the impact of two programmes associated with the C.E.L.L.S Project comprising a mentoring strand and a school delivery strand (referred to as 'awareness days' in this report).

The report begins by providing an overview of the past and current work of C.E.L.L.S to 'set the scene' of the organisation, as well as introducing the geographical and political context in which the organisation operates. Importantly, the report goes on to summarise the academic context within which C.E.L.L.S works; identifying key themes associated with crime deterrence and mentoring in the literature. After which, the evaluation aims, objectives and research methodology are each elaborated on. The main body of the report disseminates the findings of the evaluation focusing on six emergent themes: the role of experience; demands of the job; importance of education; impacts; barriers; policies and procedures. The findings section includes focused analysis to enhance the effectiveness of C.E.L.L.S, including descriptions of the practices of C.E.L.L.S, quotations from staff members and teachers, analysis of interviews and what could have been done differently for different

outcomes. Primarily, the evaluation method used here is explanatory. Lastly, a conclusion and series of recommendations are provided to summarise the impact of C.E.L.L.S and what the organisation might do differently in the future to amplify their desired outcomes.

This report was prepared by a research team at Liverpool John Moores University's Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies, led by Senior Lecturer in Criminal Justice Ester Ragonese, assisted by pedagogic, action researcher Dr. Emma Curd and a Criminal Justice masters researcher Georgia Marriott-Smith. The evaluation began in January 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and was carried out throughout lockdown restrictions in a Covid-safe manner approved by the university's ethics board. As such the report reflects on the ways that C.E.L.L.S have had to adapt to the restrictions of COVID-19 in the way that they continued to offer the service that they do.

1. **Overview of C.E.L.L.S**

The C.E.L.L.S Project is a registered charity, aiming to be one of the leading agencies in inner city youth crime deterrent in the Merseyside area and beyond. A key aim of the work of the C.E.L.L.S Project is to provide an alternative lifestyle and future for young people in Merseyside by preventing involvement in offending by offering education about the serious consequences of crime and by offering support and advice, to educate and inform young people of the consequences of crime. It does this in schools, youth centres and local organisations within and around the North West of England.
England. In addition, The C.E.L.L.S charity also works alongside a variety of other organisations, such as the police, youth offending teams, drug related services and the NHS to offer a support service to young people. The C.E.L.L.S team is comprised of a broad range of people; victims, people with lived experience, university students and those who have an interest in this area of work.

C.E.L.L.S offers two core intervention strands to promote deterrence with children and young people, described below:

- **Crime Awareness Days:** One way that C.E.L.L.S supports children and young people is through an educational, one-day programme delivered in primary, secondary schools and PRUs across Merseyside.

- **Mentoring:** Another way that C.E.L.L.S operates is through a mentoring programme offered to children and young people who are referred to C.E.L.L.S through the community or via school referrals.

2. Geographical and political context

According to official statistics gathered by Merseyside Police in 2018, records show that knife crime in Merseyside increased by 35% to 1,231 offences; making it the area with the largest rise in knife or sharp instrument offences in the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Additionally, between April 2018 to March 2019, government data, published by the Ministry of Justice in January 2020, reports that 4,500 knife and crime offences were committed by children aged between 10 and 17 (ibid.). These figures are not isolated from the populations outside Merseyside. In December 2019, the

government responded to the reported rises in violent crime by allocating eighteen police and crime commissioners an additional £35 million to continue funding specialist teams to tackle violent crime and its underlying root causes (Home Office, 2019a). This funding comes after a prior government investment of £35 million in June 2019 to set up multi-modal violence reduction units (VRUs) bringing together police, local government, health, community leaders and educational initiatives such as C.E.L.L.S (Home Office, 2019b).

Advocating for this funding, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Serious Violence Lead, Mark Burns-Williamson PCC OBE states that the amount will 'enable PCCs to continue to develop and fund their Violence Reduction Units in the short term' (Home Office, 2019a). Alongside Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, Merseyside was identified as one of three most affected areas and has received an additional funding of £6,740,000 to fund VRUs, on top of their funding per year of £3,370,000. Funding objectives are focused on; preventative and early intervention initiatives, teaching young people about the dangers of their involvement in serious crime, supporting those involved in violence when they are vulnerable, reducing reoffending and promoting public safety. It is hoped that investment in these services will stimulate closer working relationships between stakeholders to renew a holistic public health approach to tackling serious violence and knife crime.

3. Education as crime prevention

As part of the VRU programme, funding is provided to educational organisations (e.g. charities, non-profits, youth centres) to implement activities/interventions for young people, to promote their health and well-being, develop their skills and abilities, and prevent violence. Crime prevention through education remains at the heart of the work of C.E.L.L.S. Within the Merseyside based programme, C.E.L.L.S is a key stakeholder due to their aims to reduce youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Originally founded in 2009 as a charity, C.E.L.L.S has operated as a Community Interest Company (C.I.C) based in Kirkby, Merseyside, before returning to its original placement as a charity. The organisation's name – C.E.L.L.S – is an acronym for their mission statement: 'Choices, Education, Lifelong Learning, Skills'; conveying their principle objective to equip young people with the learning and resources necessary to make good choices. Predominantly working in primary and secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), C.E.L.L.S facilitates educational programmes to demonstrate the significance of crime so that young people may 'make informed choices about their own life path' (C.E.L.L.S., 2020) Currently, C.E.L.L.S' primary tool for intervention in schools are called 'Awareness Sessions' to de-glamourize crime; the subject of this evaluation.

Academic Context

Regular evaluations of the academic context are key for any organisation aimed at social change to ensure that every day working practices are in keeping with recent literature and research. This section of the report provides an overview of the relevant literature associated with crime deterrence and mentoring including discussions around hope and trust, components of which are central to desistance.

a. Mentoring

A mentor is a specially trained volunteer who spends time supporting someone. They can support a young person to; do better at school, cope with bullying and apply for jobs or colleges; the list goes on. There is a body of research that argues that one-to-one personal help – like mentoring - can be more effective than sending a young person on a group learning or development activity, as the relationship built through one-to-one mentoring creates a sense of trust which group work cannot achieve. The importance of this element of trust is discussed further in the following sections. Across sectors, mentoring programmes do not usually have a set time limit – a young person can be mentored for as long as is helpful. In crime deterrence projects, mentors are not traditionally connected to the police or a school (GOV.UK, 2020). In fact, for this sector, peer mentoring is widely accepted as the norm and mentors are generally people in the community and/or people with justice history (Buck, 2020).

Hooley, Hutchinson and Neary (2016) states how over the last ten years there has been an increased focus and shift to delivering mentoring as part of packages of support with organisations, especially with children and young people who are identified as being at risk. Indeed, The Childrens Commissioner (2018) confirmed that engaging in mentoring activities had remained popular as an intervention. Mentoring has been conceptualised by Eby (1997) as being an intense developmental relationship, which includes a mentor providing a mentee with advice, counselling and developmental opportunities, which is hoped will shape the mentee's career experiences. This conceptualisation implies that mentoring is a broad intervention, of which multiple forms exist. Eby (1997) suggests that mentoring is an intense developmental relationship, which includes a mentor providing a mentee with advice, counselling and developmental opportunities, which is hoped will shape the mentee's career experiences. As suggested by this conceptualisation, the area of mentoring is broad, with multiple types of mentoring existing.

I. Peer-mentoring and criminal justice

One type of mentoring is peer-mentoring, which this research is going to focus upon. Peer-mentoring is comprised of mentors who are of the same age, have been in a similar situation to, or have come from a similar background as their mentee (Finnegan, Whitehurst and Deaton, 2010). This practice of peer-mentoring is largely neglected by criminological literature and despite rising interest, is severely under-researched (Buck, 2016). Gaps in literature are particularly prominent regarding peer-mentoring with groups such as ex-offenders (Buck, 2018) and those with lived experiences of the criminal justice system.

Peer-mentoring between at risk of crime youths and mentors with lived experiences of the criminal justice system is an intervention used by C.E.L.L.S to deter youths from offending. The mentoring process is defined in three steps by C.E.L.L.S, these are: 1) Referral- A young person can be referred in by a partner agency or collaboration or self-refer to this scheme. Engagement will begin only on referral and assessment of referral to ensure that the intervention will be adequate and in the young person's best interest. The young person will then be matched to a suitable mentor and must agree to the engagement. 2) Mentoring agreement- At the start of the mentoring relationship, both mentor and mentee should meet and complete a mentoring agreement that sets out the guidelines of the relationship. 3) Goal setting- Supporting a young person to set their own goals is a vital part of a mentoring relationship. C.E.L.L.S. use a Personal Development Plan to allow the mentee and mentor to initially set achievable goals and measure progress during their mentoring relationship. 3-4 week check in sessions are then in place to allow for reflection and progression to be monitored. An overall check-in is conducted at 3-4 months to see if goals have been attained and the mentee is ready to leave the intervention.

Mentoring youths has resulted in positive effects as shown by Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) who found mentoring resulted in a 4-11% reduction in reoffending. Perhaps more importantly, this finding is also supported by 'Foundation 4 Life', a UK based peer-mentoring programme, where professionally trained reformed ex-offenders provide one to one support to young offenders or young people who are at risk of offending (Lopez-Humphreys and Teater, 2018). An evaluation of this programme showed that 26% of participants were

starting to think about the consequences of their offending and 20% said they actively needed to make a change (Weaver and Lightowler, 2012). This implies that the peer-mentoring has deterred youths from considering committing crimes, due to possessing the knowledge of the consequences of crime therefore deterring future offending. This emphasises the effectiveness of peer-mentoring in deterring youths from offending. Despite this programme producing positive results, little is known about other programmes or their effectiveness in preventing offending/re-offending within the youth population highlighting the need for further exploration within this area, of which this study aims to provide.

Previous research has found that adults who hold a criminal record make some of the best mentors (Bauldry and Hartmann, 2004) as they are experts in trying to resist a life of crime and can provide experiential knowledge which non-offending mentors cannot (Nixon, 2020). Ex-offenders as peer mentors can use their own stories of desistance to inspire hope in others and show the mentees how a crime-free life is possible (ibid). Youths are also thought to learn pro-social behaviours from positive peer groups (Butts, Bazemore and Meroe, 2010), further providing support for the interventions' effectiveness.

 After considering the literature presented, it is clear that peer-mentoring with ex-offenders and justice-involved youths is not a fully proven, effective intervention, however it shows promise with positive results being generated from studies.

b. Methods of deterring young people from crime

The process of deterring young people from crime is not straightforward and different organisations/researchers hold different views on which methods are most successful in achieving this deterrence. This has resulted in numerous methods being implemented in the fight against deterring youth crime, the most popular of which are discussed within this section.

I. Scared Straight

The 'Scared Straight' method of deterrence began in the 1970's as a way to deter at-risk or delinquent children from a future life of crime. The underlying theory of programmes such as Scared Straight is deterrence. Programme advocates and others believe that realistic depictions of life in prison and presentations by inmates will deter juvenile offenders or children at risk from becoming delinquent from further involvement with crime (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino and Buehler, 2003). It is believed that if juvenile offenders can be reached and deterred early on before a criminal career is established, then maybe these juveniles will opt to cease and desist in further criminal behaviour (Sherman et al., 2002).

Programmes can either be confrontational in nature with adult inmates sharing graphic stories about prison life in a very hostile way, or they can be less confrontational and more educational sessions in which inmates share their life stories and describe the choices they made that ultimately led to imprisonment (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino and Buehler, 2003). The confrontational method was ultimately found to be ineffective with multiple experimental studies supporting this suggestion (Lewis, 1983; Yarborough, 1979). In fact, it was even concluded that the method produced an adverse effect, because delinquency

rates were significantly higher among programme participants than among non-participants (Finckenauer, 1982). Educational rather than confrontational approaches have been demonstrated to show promise (Klenowski, Bell and Dodson, 2010). A possible suggestion to help deter youth crime might therefore be to combine non-confrontational programmes with aftercare programmes which have been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism (Andrews et al., 1990; Lipsey, 1992).

Regardless of the chosen method it is unreasonable to expect that any single experience, regardless of its profound effect would have a significant and long-term impact on an issue as complex as juvenile criminal behaviour (Klenowski, Bell and Dodson, 2010). This finding suggests that any such programme requires a series of sessions to 'follow-up' with youths and repetition to embed learning outcomes.

II. Education as a crime preventative/deterrent

Education is considered an especially important form of crime prevention, as young people who are not engaged in education are considered more 'at risk' of becoming involved in crime than those who are engaged in education (Farrington, 2007). Cooper, Sutherland and Roberts (2007) define education as offering a form of protection, through engagement in constructive activity and the opening up of alternative lifestyle options. Youth crime prevention programmes are considered the best way to utilise education as a form of crime prevention/deterrence, however these programmes should deliver education in the school setting in order to allow education on crime to be immersed into the child's school curriculum (Elliott et al., 1998). Educational programmes regarding crime can have a substantial effect on children who are at risk if the intervention is delivered early enough (Howitt, 2015). Programmes delivered to very young children at nursery or pre-school are a good example of interventions which have resulted in positive benefits regarding crime (ibid.) The notion therefore is that education should be provided to all children and young people and not just those who have already offended or those who are at risk of offending (Souhami, 2013). The school setting is shown as having an important role to play in the success of education as a form of deterrence, as research has illustrated the important role in which schools play in socialising young people towards prosocial norms and diverting them from undesirable behaviour (Catalano et al., 2004). The setting of schools in combination with educational programmes therefore seem to be a suited match to enable success.

Educational programmes are not always delivered by schools, they can encompass a wide variety of organisations and can be undertaken in a wide variety of settings. For example, the Youth Access Initiative is a project which functions as an alternative to educational exclusion, providing young people with life skills, training and employment opportunities in addition to education. Each of these measures have been identified in the UK as good practice indicators for work with disaffected young people, particularly young offenders (Utting and Vennard, 2000). Programmes such as the Youth Access Initiative which focus on skills training with populations who were already exhibiting some behavioural problems

have been shown to be especially effective in preventing delinquency (ibid). Another example of an effective educational/skills training programme for young people is Life Skills Training. This programme is aimed at young people aged 12-14 and teaches skills such as making good decisions, coping with anxiety and self-management, in addition to providing education on topics such as the consequences of substance abuse and the process of becoming dependent on drugs. The programme consists of 30 lessons which are spread over 3 academic years in the US. The programme is taught using methods such as discussion, demonstrations, guided practice, and other forms of interactive teaching strategies. Evidence has shown that this programme does reduce criminal behaviour (Botvin and Griffin, 2004), supporting the idea that educational programmes as a form of crime prevention/deterrence are successful.

The literature presented above therefore iterates that education as a form of crime prevention/deterrence is a successful method, implying that C.E.L.L.S' choice to adopt educative school awareness days is a merit to them as an organisation.

III. Hope within desistance

Hope plays a central part within desistance research (Burnett and Maruna, 2004; Farrall et al., 2014), with hope permitting an individual to envision their future self as including a non-offending identity and life that can be lived (Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002). Hope, therefore, represents an inner visioning or picturing of a desired future reality for the individual and/or the world beyond them (Patton and Farrall, 2021). This idea of the future individual forces them to consider how this future can be realised and achieved (Farrall, 2005), resulting in a change in decision making to enable this future to become a reality (Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002). This process helps build self-efficacy, self-esteem and helps determine what actions they will take, and, importantly, which actions they will not (Healy, 2014).

The notion of hope is also linked to an idea of 'Moral Redeemability' which is the assumption that people can change, or, that a person's past is not his or her destiny. 'Criminality' is thus not a permanent trait of individuals but an adaptation to a person's circumstances which can be changed (Maruna and King, 2009). The overall message from the literature on hope is that if you can give a young person hope, a sense of their own wellbeing, real self-confidence, and a feeling that the future can be better than the present, then one might succeed in preventing them from committing crime (Blunkett, 2008).

IIII. Trust within desistance

Within desistance research, building trust and good relationships between mentors and mentees is key to success and change. Motivation to desist is also highly related to personal relations with staff (Rowe and Soppitt, 2014). This is demonstrated by findings from Rowe and Soppitt showing that staff who were perceived as having an authentic interest in assisting the desisters were more likely to create a good personal relation with mentees

(Rowe and Soppitt, 2014). An individuals' commitment to desist from offending was attributed to sustained relationships of trust that they had with staff, which other researchers such as Robinson (2005) have also concluded, highlighting how important trust is within the process of desistance.

Within mentoring relationships, it is highlighted that mentees identifying their mentor as a figure of trust is essential (Erdem and Aytemur, 2008). This necessity for trust within a mentoring relationship is restated by Ralph (1999) and Young and Perrewé (2000). Trusting a mentor is linked with considering that person to be competent, consistent, interested and open to communication (Erdem and Aytemur, 2008). Without establishing trust, it is argued that mentors cannot truly support mentees with whom they interact (Sipe, 2002). Within mentoring relationships involving youths as mentees, trust may be hard and may require time, it is nothing that is guaranteed within the relationship (Sipe, 2002). However, mentors who focus first on building this trust and becoming friends with their mentees tend to be successful in gaining trust and being accepted by their mentee with time (ibid). Time is considered essential for building trust, which is considered essential for success highlighting how mentors need to be patient if they are wanting the relationship to work.

Evaluation Project

The overall aim of the study was to explore, evaluate and report on the processes and impact of the work of C.E.L.L.S on young people in Merseyside. This was specifically in relation to the work commissioned by the Merseyside Violence Reduction Unit for the work that C.E.L.L.S were carrying out in 2019 and early 2020 during the funding period. The evaluation project fell within several periods of national lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore much of the research was undertaken online, and via the analysis of secondary data collected by C.E.L.L.S. Working within the restrictions, the research team addressed the following research questions:

1. What impact does C.E.L.L.S make on young people during awareness days?

2. What processes are used by C.E.L.L.S to alter the behaviours and mind-sets of young people?

3. Are there recommendations to be made on how C.E.L.L.S operates?

a.   Methodology

The research team employed a mixed method approach that comprised of three different stages of data collection and analysis. The different stages involved the triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative data methods and allowed for the challenges of Covid-19 to be addressed and captured. It was the research team's intention to involve the young people as beneficiaries of C.E.L.L.S as much as possible in the research design, the decision about the methods used and the research itself. However, because of ethical concerns in terms of confidentiality and safeguarding and the constraints placed on research practices during Covid-19 this was not possible. It is acknowledged by the researchers that this is an area that needs further investigation and discussion.

The following research methods were used:

1.   Analysis of two types of secondary data collected and held by C.E.L.L.S anonymously during the funding period:

– Evaluation data: Captured through basic surveys undertaken with children and young people involved in the awareness days directly after the event took place.

– Matrixes created through The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS): Captured with young people during engagement with C.E.L.L.S' mentoring programme during the funding period.

2.   Analysis of C.E.L.L.S documentation, including documents associated with organisational information such as C.E.L.L.S' mission statement, values and business plan, as well as reports concerning programme delivery during the funding period.

3.   Reference to relevant literature

4.   Interviews with staff from schools (3)

5.   Interviews with C.E.L.L.S Staff (3)

6.   Interview with C.E.L.L.S Project Manager

7.   Interview with VRU (1)

8.   Interview with YJS (1)

9.   Interviews with Mentors (4)

Secondary data and evaluation forms

We used secondary data previously collected from C.E.L.L.S presentation days to analyse the impact of C.E.L.L.S and their methods of evaluation. This data was collected anonymously by C.E.L.L.S during Crime Awareness Days, obtained through gatekeeper consent.

During presentation days, it is a C.E.L.L.S procedure to ask students to self-report on learning and attitude improvement and motivation/inspiration gained from the event. To do this they use evaluation forms collected at the end of each session and/or at the end of the day. The research team used forms collected by C.E.L.L.S on awareness days to inform our analysis. Forms include questions pertaining to crime and its consequences such as:

1. Do you now know the dangers on being involved with guns, gangs and knives?

2. Do you understand how crimes affect other people including you own family?

3. Do you understand the implications of having a weapon?

4. Will you use what you have learned on decisions made in the future?

5. Have we inspired you not to carry weapons?

Analysis of documents

The first stage of data collection and analysis comprised a review of C.E.L.L.S' documents, policies and manuals. For example, programme and training manuals, session plans and reporting from previously collected data, were evidence used to assess the quality of data already collected with young people and enabled the research team to demonstrate the impact of funding on working processes. This stage of the research was designed to create an evidence base to situate a holistic evaluation of the work undertaken by C.E.L.L.S. These observations were used to inform our understandings of this aspect of the VRU and add context to the evaluation.

Interviews with school staff

C.E.L.L.S collect comments from schoolteachers to assess the impact of the programme on young people. More rigorous processes of interviewing with staff members gave us additional insight into the impact of C.E.L.L.S on the school and the local community. Interviews with staff discussed the impact of VRU work programmes and broader violence prevention activities. Interview questions included experiences of C.E.L.L.S and its actual and anticipated programme impacts and sustainability.

Interviews with C.E.L.L.S Mentors

The team at C.E.L.L.S comprise people whose lives have been affected by crime and therefore they are crucial to interview. Staff members and mentors are an important tactic in C.E.L.L.S' approach to reducing crime. By creating opportunities for young people to hear and speak directly to people who can relate to them using own experience, C.E.L.L.S argue that young people are encouraged to seek a life outside of crime. Interview questions considered the impact of C.E.L.L.S on the lives of mentors, as well as the perceived impacts on young people they work with. Particular attention was paid to mentoring within the Programme. Interviews were semi structured to enable the research team to understand beliefs, opinions and emotions from the perspective of study participants (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020).

Participants

The project employed both 'availability sampling' (Monette et al 2014) and 'purposive sampling' (Waliman 2006) and relied on both the Project Manager and the schools acting as 'gatekeepers'. One of the advantages of using gatekeepers was that it allowed for prior knowledge of participants personal capacity, well-being and availability. This provided a safeguard against the unintentional recruitment of vulnerable people. It is acknowledged that the gatekeepers in this project were linked to C.E.L.L.S and the schools and were as such interested parties.

Analysis

The evaluation data was analysed thematically and through techniques associated with Carol Gilligan's 'The Listening Guide'. Thematic analysis was chosen for its ability to communicate findings and evaluation outcomes effectively to a variety of stakeholders, from both outside and within the academy, for whom this report was written.

Gilligan's 'The Listening Guide' was also identified for its empathetic approach to participants, highlighting the complexities of human relationships, speaking and listening. It is a highly relational approach to analysing interviews, identified by the research team to emphasize the different voices used in conversation with others, with great advantages for exploring mentor/mentee relationships. The parameters for this type of enquiry consider four constituent focuses; Who is speaking and to whom? In what body or physical space? Telling what stories about which relationships? In what societal and cultural frameworks? (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). These four focal points are important to identify what stories are told and to whom do they matter, as well as considering minor and major themes. One of the key stages of this approach is to create 'I poems' from the data by taking each sentence that starts with 'I" and listing them in sequence to create an individualised poem. Gilligan argues that these poems give insight into what people know and say about themselves without being aware of it.

Findings

Our findings are organised thematically and encompass three key areas; **1.** The role of experience; **2**. Demands of the job, and **3.** Importance of education. Within these major themes are subthemes which are explored in greater details within the body of the findings section and are illustrated with infographics. Findings related to *impact, barriers, and policies and procedures* follow the three key findings to enhance the work of C.E.L.L.S in the future.

1. **The role of experience**

The role of experience is a crucial part of the working practice of C.E.L.L.S. All interviewed participants highlighted the power of mentors when speaking from personal experiences of crime. Mentors are regarded by Children and Young People (CYP) as 'experts' in the experience of criminality, an outcome of which meant that CYP were more likely to engage with mentors, rather than educators from an 'academic' perspective. This vantage point was important when gaining trust from CYP and make learning relatable to CYP from similar locations and backgrounds.

For teaching staff, the ability to resonate with the children was expressed as being a great strength of the organisation as it broke down barriers, promoted trust and encouraged the CYP to not only engage more but also remain inquisitive around the areas after the end of

the session. The importance of experience appears indisputable with the interviewees all listing this as one of the main strengths of C.E.L.L.S. Within these three areas were discussed; the power of authentic voices, the ability to resonate and experts by experience:

a) Power of authentic stories/voices

Authenticity was identified as one of the key elements of the awareness days and throughout the research was discussed by the C.E.L.L.S Project Manager, C.E.L.L.S mentor team, C.E.L.L.S staff and school staff. It was highlighted as a crucial method of keeping the pupils engaged and a way of generating respect for the mentors and the work of C.E.L.L.S more generally.

I think it is a lot more beneficial as well for the young people, and for the ex-con to be involved with it. And it's not. I don't mean that for the sake of the ex-con, I mean it for the individual or the young person involved because they've been there, they've lived that life and the young person really does engage with that person, more than what do with the academic side of things. Or the person who's is worked through social services. (Mentor 1)

"When they discuss their own experiences, pupils tend to grasp that, and you know, it becomes more believable rather than them just telling the story about somebody else." School teacher 1

"I think it's the stories that really, really, like, get them involved and engaged." (YJS Worker)

One of the mentors spoke about being frank in his approach to the young people by "telling it how it is". This viewpoint was closely linked to the identity of the mentor being the most important aspect of the programme delivery.

Because we've done it and we're so honest about it, we get so much respect back from the kids. And they do listen to us. (C.E.L.L.S Staff 2)

The stories told by mentors had a profound effect on the teachers also, highlighting how the effects of the stories are far-reaching. *"The scenarios were quite heart-wrenching for us*

because as a professional you can absorb and feel, and you can understand and relate."
School teacher 2

"To hear first-hand accounts from people who had been in prison was really poignant."
School teacher 3

This ability to influence school staff, highlights the power of the stories told, as education is not solely limited to the young people but also staff. By affecting staff members, the stories and lessons taught will be integrated into staff's teachings and will help the impact of the main points from the awareness days to remain strong.

b) Ability to resonate

The ability to resonate with the mentee was described by mentors as being of upmost importance with it being suggested that resonating created a strong connection and an almost instant trust within the relationship. It has been previously stated in this report that without establishing trust, mentors cannot truly support mentees (Sipe, 2002); this highlights further how important it is that the mentors can establish this trust through their ability to resonate.

"A lot of the young people do connect with us a lot more. They do take on board a lot more of what we say because we have been there, it builds and makes that trust a lot easier"
(Mentor 2)

Within interviews, it was implied that many mentees and young people have become frustrated and numb to the interventions of many professionals who although are trying to help simply do not understand what the young person is experiencing or thinking.

"they can really relate to them and you know it's not like so, for example, me. I didn't have that kind of life. You know, I went to Uni. I came out and got a job, and now here I am. So they can't relate to me." (YJS Worker)

This lack of understanding and an inability to relate leads to the young person not engaging and thus being seen as unsuccessful. This is not the case within mentoring relationships, whereby mentors previous experience and life choices make them different to professionals and thereby more able to succeed with the young people.

"...so having the ex-offenders, they can bounce off us and they can relate to us straight away, so I, I feel like we do make a lot more progress coming from the background that we've come from." (Mentor 4)

"There's nothing better than when visitors who know the area and who are maybe from the area, understand the challenges that our young people face." School teacher 3

"We have a knowledge or a history of maybe similar things...I think that kind of helps us get underneath that barrier." (Mentor 1)

The quotations highlight how it is this ability to resonate and relate to the mentees/young people which is the source of successful relationships. It is connoted that without this prior experience and knowledge the mentors too would not be successful, highlighting just how important the role of experience is to success. This point has been noted within academic literature whereby it has been expressed that ex-offenders as peer mentors can use their own stories of desistance to inspire hope in others and show the mentees how a crime-free life is possible [(Nixon, 2020)](). This results in success, which is expressed through staff experiences.

"I have had teachers coming up to me saying 'a few of our kids want to come and talk to you one on one before you go' so I know what I'm doing is really working." CELLS Staff 2

"they said, when is the next, when can they come back again because they'd like to do it again…So I think that alone speaks volumes here that they just, they just enjoy going there." (YJS Worker)

c) Experts by experience

It was clear throughout the conversations with the C.E.L.L.S mentor team that the reality of lived and personal experience was valued, and all the mentors/facilitators highlighted their experiences of crime and the impacts this had had on their life as being imperative to the work of C.E.L.L.S and the engagement of the young people they worked with. They described how being 'experts' in their own life experience provided opportunities where the narrative could be switched, and negatives turned into positive learning moments for those involved. This was echoed through the awareness days that were delivered and observed and the reflections of the staff within schools. A key strength of C.E.L.L.S is that they promote the active engagement of those with lived experience to work as facilitators and mentors. Linked to this the identification of role modelling behaviour was a central theme and having engagement with someone who already had a criminal record demonstrated how hope was not lost. One of the mentors talked about the human side of crime and how throughout his interventions with young people he tried to humanise stories. This was symbolised through the breaking down of barriers and the opening up of safe spaces to engage.

"I sat there at that age and know exactly what you're thinking." (Mentor 3)

"I think the mentee looks up to you then because they're like 'Well if you can do it and you've been through it' then they look at it like 'I can too.'" (Mentor 3)

"I'm not here to tell you what to do, I'm here to give you an insight as well into this is what happened to me, you know we are two different people but you know, two and two might equal four for you as well." (Mentor 1)

The role of experience is additionally highlighted through the 'I' Poems below as not only enabling mentors to resonate with mentees, but also as providing the ability for mentors to instil hope into the mentees by showing that it is possible to overcome crime, as they have achieved it.
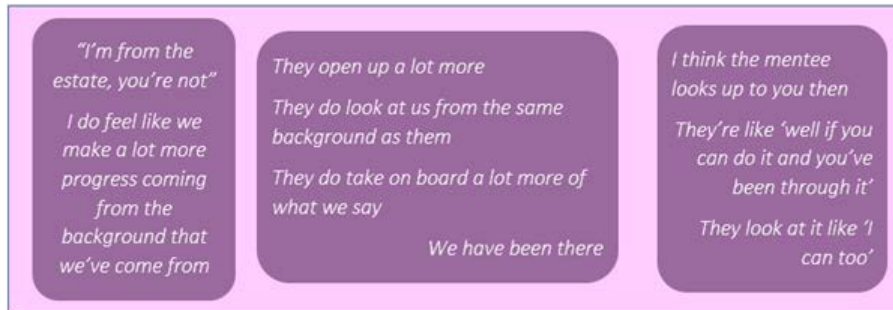

The mentors are shown in the poems as acting as a role model to the young person, helping them to see how it is possible to live crime-free. The mentors are able to provide inspiration to the mentees and give them a visualisation of success. The element of hope is essential in the process of desistance (Burnett and Maruna, 2004) as it enables the individual to picture a desired future reality for themselves (Patton and Farrall, 2021). Through helping the mentee visualise the change, mentors are more likely to create change within the young person, thus helping them to achieve deterrence from crime. The findings thus support the idea of Blunkett (2008), previously presented in the literature review, who suggests that hope is the reason for success within younger people and deterrence from crime.

2. **Demands of the job**

Across sectors, mentoring is a demanding role as it requires relational and interpersonal approaches to supporting and coaching young people. This is intensified within the criminal justice sector due to the high-risk nature of the issues faced by children and young people but also because of their vulnerabilities. For C.E.L.L.S staff, this is reflected by the complex attributes of the mentor role to:

- Share personal (and sometimes traumatic) experiences on a daily basis.

- Engage in ongoing persistence and patience to support vulnerable young people, sometimes referred to as 'opening the eyes' of the young people they work with in interviews.

- Maintain overlapping boundaries between professional self and personal self.

- Demonstrate openness within the exit processes, where it is expected that mentors will remain in contact with mentees after the mentoring finishes, whilst also operating an 'open door policy' for previous mentees.
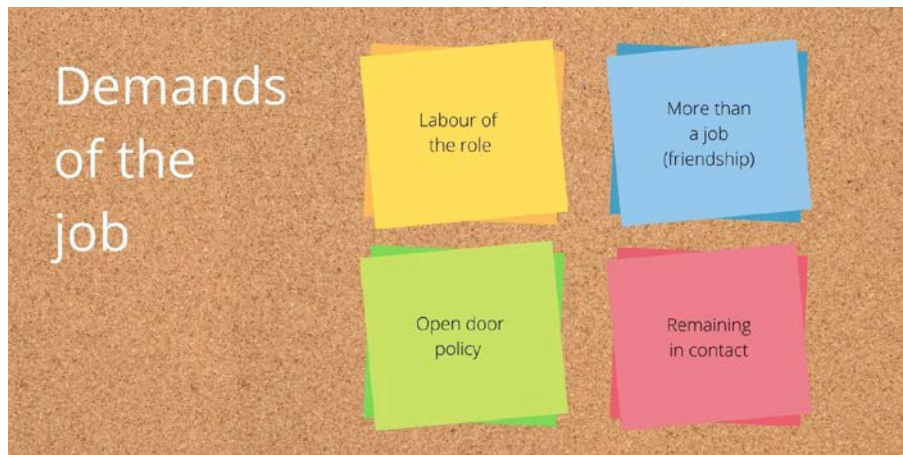
a) **Labour of the role**

The mentors and staff at C.E.L.L.S all talked about the emotional labour involved in the work that they do. The labour of the role is evidenced by this theme with reference to the demands and responsibilities placed onto mentors. This can be viewed as a struggle for the mentor who is only one individual and is incapable of creating mass change alone:

The reality of mentoring is therefore a lot harder and a lot more difficult to navigate than is expressed.

"I mean it is challenging." (Mentor 1)

"It, it can be difficult." (Mentor 4)

"There's only so much you can do as a mentor" (Mentor 3)

b) **More than a job-friendship**

The mentor/mentee relationships at C.E.L.L.S are complex. Often, the two subjects engaged in the mentoring exchange become closer than one might expect from a professional mentoring relationship, and because of this, mentors sometimes refer to the relationship as a kind of friendship.

"I mean obviously it's a mentoring relationship but sometimes they gain a friendship with you." (Mentor 3)

This view is further shared by a Youth Justice Worker interviewed:

"it's a bit like a one to one, professional friend kind of person that they have on the side." (YJS Worker)

These quotes express an everyday reality where mentoring extends further than a job. For the mentors, it becomes a role within which emotions and connections are entwined, meaning that it becomes difficult to detach themselves from the children and young people they work with.

"It's quite a hard thing to separate yourself from at times to be fair. Because you do build up a relationship with the young person." (Mentor 1)

This struggle with detachment is expressed through one mentor revealing how they continue to maintain contact with a previous mentee:

"A young person who I worked with for quite a while... his mum regularly rings me and asks me how I'm doing, tells me how they're doing and things like that." (Mentor 1)

The relationship built is revealed as continuing long past the end of the intervention. Although articulated as being a strength of the intervention by mentors, problems arise with this extension of the relationship as dependency on the mentor to maintain a friendship with the mentee is created.

"You do end up like...having these connections with the people you work with." (Mentor 1)

"I'll have mentees that will ring me and will see how I'm doing outside of our scheduled time, and it's building up that friendship with them." (Mentor 4)

c) **Remaining in contact**

By continuing the relationship past the end of the intervention, both mentors and mentees may become dependent on each other, further complicating the necessary ending of the relationship. This is evidenced by a mentor claiming attachment:

"I get like erm, you don't get attached but you do in a way though" (Mentor 3)

Zilberstein and Spencer (2014) state that attachment is viewed as a danger to the mentoring intervention, as when mentees or mentors become attached, endings can become destructive. Youth with previous experience of loss or poor attachments in particular may find the ending of mentoring relationships particularly difficult (Stroebe, 2002; Many 2009). Some mentors may choose to avoid this difficulty by avoiding the end of the relationship and continuing it past the intervention. Zilberstein and Spencer (2014) suggest that this shouldn't happen as relationships should have a clear ending to allow participants to appreciate what they had and to move on to build new connections. This research indicates how the finding of relationship continuation is not a positive of the intervention but rather an issue which has the potential to create severe damage.

This continuation of the relationship is also unhealthy for mentors as the role begins to impact their lives outside of the intervention, with a work-life balance not being achieved. This is expressed further by the contact of which mentees can have outside of work hours

"I'll have mentees that will ring me and will see how I'm doing outside of our scheduled time" (Mentor 4)

Although the strength of this is evident, for the mentors there does not seem to be boundaries, resulting in work 'taking over' their lives, with mentors unable to take a break and relieve themselves of the pressure of the role.

d) **Open-door policy**

Pressure on mentors is increased by the 'open door' policy practised by C.E.L.L.S, meaning that the mentor's role is never-ending.

"We say that we have like an open-door policy, like if someone needs us or assistance or help in the future we are able to sort of like give them help if we're able to." (Mentor 1)

This policy places pressure on the mentor to help more young people than is expected, which may result in burnout or the mentor sacrificing their own health and wellbeing to prioritise the young people wanting/needing help.

3. **Importance of Education**

This idea of educating young people is extremely common within the mentoring intervention and C.E.L.L.S itself, with one of C.E.L.L.S' aims being to educate children and young people about the serious consequences of crime (C.E.L.L.S, 2020).

a) **Reality of crime and the negative impacts**

Often, the reality of crime and its consequences are not expressed to young people. Instead, the benefits and positive aspects are expressed to young people to entice them into the lifestyle. Mentors aim to end this lack of education regarding crime so choose to explain and educate the young people on the truth.

One way in which mentors achieve this aim, is by teaching the young people about the negative aspects of crime and the reality of crime, which mentees may not be aware of. Mentors are honest with mentees and believe that honesty is what will result in the best outcomes for the intervention.

"I think that having a conversation, an open, honest, informative erm education about it, is the best route for the majority of things." (Mentor 1)

Throughout the conversations with C.E.L.L.S staff, it was clear that having the identity of someone with lived experience of the criminal justice system was important to all, however this was articulated in different ways and varied according to their own facilitation and mentoring approaches. Storytelling and hope formed a lot of the ways in which the mentors discussed the reality of crime.

"These people aren't talking about the bad stuff that is happening to them. You know they're not putting that on Instagram, they're not putting that on Snapchat, where their mums houses windows have been put through. You know their families crying and they're sat in a cell crying because they've had this happen to them or you know, that nice watch that you bought, your friends been stabbed in front of you, you know. They just don't illustrate that so I give it to them all." (Mentor 1)

The stories told by C.E.L.L.S staff allowed both pupils and teachers to separate the reality of crime and imprisonment and the glamourized version of which is shown through the media:

"Prison life is obviously very different to what we see on the telly." School teacher 3

"It was making all these different connections to actually the realities of prison life." School teacher 3

"they kind of challenge these unrealistic images that children might sometimes have, you know, have just a crime school or carrying knives is cool and you know just trying to kind of break that stuff that are very much glamorized on Netflix or Amazon and all these different kinds of things." (YJS Worker)

Through emphasising the reality of crime, it is hoped that young people will be deterred from the lifestyle and thus choose to adopt a different pathway within life. The mentors feel as though this will work, as they believe it would have for them.

"If I had an older person that was telling me how negative crime is, and the negative consequences about it, then I wouldn't have turned out maybe as bad as I did." (Mentor 4)

This idea mirrors the idea of Blunkett (2008) mentioned in the literature, who states that if you can give a young person hope, a sense of their own wellbeing, real self-confidence, and

a feeling that the future can be better than the present, then preventing them from committing crime may be possible. By being a role model for the young person and showing them that desistance is possible, the mentors are instilling hope into the mentees and enabling them to be guided down a better pathway.

b)**Alternative paths in life**

The options of different paths in life are also taught to mentees with mentors ensuring that the mentees are educated on different potential routes to take and the benefits of choosing such paths

"It's about illuminating all of these other paths and saying 'you don't just have to go down this one'." (Mentor 1)

By revealing to mentees that there are other options rather than crime, mentors are providing an alternative lifestyle to mentees and are showing how it is possible to desist from this life if that is what they want. Often young people are surrounded by negative criminal influences and are therefore not aware that other options in life exist. By making young people aware of this, C.E.L.L.S. are opening their minds to the possibilities which exist for them, instead of simply limiting them to a life of crime and subsequently imprisonment.

c) **Changing mindsets and behaviour**

It was clear from the research that changing the mindset and subsequent behaviours of the people that C.E.L.L.S worked with was paramount and all the C.E.L.L.S staff were clear that this started at the point of the first conversation and point of contact.

The research iterated how it was important to make young people aware of their actions and their consequences to make them see that this behaviour is not acceptable and needs to change.

"It's just making them aware of what they're doing and what impact it'll have on   them and other people." (Mentor 1)

"They were encouraging self awareness in those young people and they were listening." (VRU Worker)

C.E.L.L.S. staff revealed how to change the young people's mindsets and behaviour it was essential to give them aspirations and something to aim for, otherwise the task would be pointless. This idea mirrors that of Farrall (2005) and Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002) who, as stated in the academic literature section, state that giving an individual aspirations and an idea of a better future, forces the individual to consider how this future can be achieved and as such forces them to change their decision making to ensure that this

future can become a reality. This suggests that young people need something of which to envision and therefore work towards otherwise their mindset and behaviour will not change as they do not see no valid reason to enact this change.

"It's about giving young people hope." (Mentor 1)

The team at C.E.L.L.S. expressed how they felt that their efforts to change mentees mindsets and behaviours was being recognised and was successful.

"I think we're reaching a lot of the young people, we're getting them, we're reaching them, we're changing their outlook, we're opening their eyes." (Mentor 2)

This provides hope that it is possible to change young people's mindsets and behaviours and therefore it is possible to deter young people from crime through the process of mentoring.

d) A lack of education and the need for it

Despite C.E.L.L.S.' best efforts to educate the young people surrounding crime, it is suggested that there is a **lack of education** elsewhere in society which negatively impacts the work of which C.E.L.L.S. are able to conduct.

"I think some parents don't have the ability to understand the impact of their child's behaviour." School teacher 1

Through the lack of education in society, young people are being forced to miss the opportunity of education around crime and thus themselves are uneducated on the area which results in more crime. This negative cycle was expressed by one participant:

"You wouldn't believe how many schools sort of go 'oh we don't have that problem here' and it's like unfortunately those young people, who could have been young people in there that just from hearing us talk about these things, could prevent stuff happening or they're already involved in it and you have no idea and I think banning or denying it is not the answer." (Mentor 1)

Regarding schools playing a vital role in the education of young people as alluded to by the above quote, it was expressed by school teachers themselves that they should be doing more and that schools in general need to improve to help young people in educating them around this area.

"We have these events maybe once or twice a year, that's not enough." School teacher 2

"We need to do more" School teacher 3

This example highlights the importance of education and the **need for education,** with the dangers of education not being present within young people or society being expressed.

"It's more dangerous if they're not educated on it." (Mentor 1)

"They (young people) need to be educated from a young age." (Mentor 1)

This need for education is emphasised in the literature through the finding that education is an essential method of crime prevention, as young people who are not engaged in education are considered more 'at risk' of becoming involved in crime than those who are engaged in education (Farrington, 2007). This finding reiterates the point emphasised by interviewees that education is essential and needs to be the main focus in the fight against youth crime.

4. Impacts

a) **Idea of realisation**

One of the main impacts of the mentoring intervention and the work of C.E.L.L.S has been shown to be the changes within the young people and how they view crime and its consequences, how they view their futures and how they view themselves. This change and sudden realization is described by a mentor as

"'turning their own light on'" (Mentor 1)

This implies that the young person was once living in darkness and couldn't see anything other than what they previously believed or were told to think. This idea of becoming aware of possible changes they could make and becoming aware of their actions and consequences is a credit to the work of mentors and the C.E.L.L.S team as ultimately the lives of young people are being changed for the better.

"It's sort of that idea of them like opening up that world and opening up their eyes and taking their blinkers off and going 'oh wow there is actually different ways I can go here'." (Mentor 1)

The above quotation highlights how through the interventions with the young people, they begin to realize the opportunities that are available to them and they begin to see how a life of crime does not have to be their only option, there are different paths possible to take instead. The idea of hope is generated through this impact with the young person appearing to now have positive thoughts and views on the future instead of feeling trapped in the negative cycle of crime and their past choices.

"I think they realise like it doesn't matter what you've been through or what you're going through it's, it doesn't define you as a person, it doesn't define what you're going to be or where you're going to go." (Mentor 3)

The realization of there being alternative paths in life stems from the young person realizing how their actions have consequences and what these consequences are and how far-reaching they can be.

"It's a level of self-awareness...of consequences and actions." (Mentor 1)

"It makes them realise that or makes them think that when they're in that situation, of the consequences now rather than not knowing anything." (Mentor 4)

By realizing how their actions and crimes committed can impact other people and themselves, the young people are demonstrating a level of maturity and growth implying that the interventions are helping them to mature into young adults who are aware of their surroundings and implications of choices they make. To succeed at this, it is connoted by team members indicated that the key is to make the young person realize their own potential and own worth and the rest will follow.

"Let them realise that they have got skills, that they are worth something within the community and you know it's not that 'you're not worth nothing, you'll never amount to nothing'." (Mentor 4)

The impact of helping the young person realise specific things is shown to be of high importance in creating any change and ensuring a successful relationship and a successful change in attitude and thought towards crime.

b) **Macro/Micro impacts of awareness days**

Often, as researchers, when attempting to understand impact we ask 'what changed?' Due to ethical limitations regarding Covid-19 we were not able to speak to CYP with direct experience of the work of C.E.L.L.S and therefore measuring change in behaviours and mindsets is further complicated. For this reason, we have chosen to evaluate the impact of C.E.L.L.S in both macro and micro frameworks. This is linked to our understanding of impact in educational settings. An example of this might constitute a study exploring impact on teaching and learning practices and how these might be changed to seek improved results.

For the purposes of this evaluation, we have chosen to discuss impact through the macro and micro lenses, an approach commonly utilised in sociological and educational research. Macro impact relates to the impact made by C.E.L.L.S on a large scale, impacting the community at large or institutions working with C.E.L.L.S at a structural level. Meanwhile, micro impact relates to the small ways that C.E.L.L.S has impacted the lives and everyday interactions with individuals. For example, the experience of a teacher having undertaken an awareness day would constitute as micro impact, or the recollection of a specific encounter with a staff member. In this frame,

Throughout the evaluation, it was identified that C.E.L.L.S awareness days are a useful tool to start conversations around crime but are limited in their capacity to have a long-lasting impact due to their one-day model. Many participants mentioned the overwhelming external pressures children faced, whether that be via social media or media sources where crime is glamourized, or the need to acquire material belongings which could also impact children to turn to crime as a career, or peer pressure from other children and adults; the list continues. Whilst measuring the impact of C.E.L.L.S working processes on the CYP they work with, it is important to keep in mind some of these pressures.

Participants spoke about the positive short-term impact of C.E.L.L.S inside and outside the classroom, where pupils would continue to ask questions about the work of C.E.L.L.S and crime more generally.

5. Barriers

a) **Operational Challenges**

The analysis of data highlighted how C.E.L.L.S. as an organisation face challenges in their primary operation. A clear finding was that there was not a robust referral process, with there being a lack of clarity on the procedure for referrals. During the evaluation, it was hard to decipher how schools got involved in awareness days or with C.E.L.L.S themselves, how the referral process worked or how schools highlighted and put forward students for C.E.L.L.S' services. One teacher described the process as:

"Yes, so erm it was just an email, so we emailed over him and says, obviously, we would like this" School teacher 2

This quotation highlights the lack of clear procedure and helps to highlight the lack of a direct pathway for all schools/referrers to follow. The findings suggest that C.E.L.L.S may need to reflect on this process and try to create a more clear, focused pathway into their services, to allow all users to enter their service in the same way.

Another challenged presented by the analysis was the lack of time that C.E.L.L.S appears to have regarding administrative routines and governance processes. Although it is necessary to acknowledge the constraints of which C.E.L.L.S. work under to support delivery and infrastructure, C.E.L.L.S need to develop their infrastructure further, to enable them to embed team meetings, supervision type tasks, policies, and system development into their routine, permitting the organisation to run as smoothly as possible. By finding time to devote to these tasks, C.E.L.L.S. would benefit immensely and would find their work easier and more structured over time.

b) **Influence of others**

The second barrier to success within mentoring is the influence of other people.

"It is difficult because they are seeing what they are seeing and they're seeing what they're surrounded with." (Mentor 1)

"Some of them just got involved with the wrong type of peers outside of school." School teacher 2

The 'I' poems express how the mentors have a difficult job in helping the young people, as when the intervention finishes, they are returning back to the same environment causing their criminal behaviour. One mentor states they 'can't do nothing' implying that the young person is unreachable in a different way than suggested above.

"The input that I have for that one hour a week, you know with what other influences they've got around them within the family home, it doesn't seem to work." (Mentor 4)

"Our kids are constantly going back to the same living situation or coming into school to give them structure but then they go back home to the same living situation again and its just a vicious cycle." School teacher 2

This barrier to success is seen to be a big issue with mentors finding it difficult to outweigh the influences

"These negative influences will always outweigh what I can bring to the table." (Mentor 4)

"There's been other lads where I turned up and I think their home life is so chaotic...I can't do nothing, er, the input that I have for that one hour a week, you know with what other influences they've got around them within the family home, it doesn't seem to work." (Mentor 4)
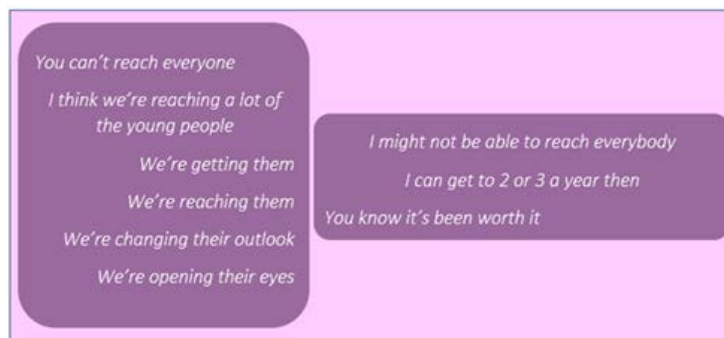
This theme highlights how the intervention of mentoring faces multiple barriers which prevents the work and the subsequent success of the intervention in preventing and deterring youth crime.

c) **Impossible to reach everyone**

The first issue is that mentoring cannot physically help every young person in need.

"You can't reach everyone, it's impossible to reach everyone." (Mentor 2)

"I might not be able to reach everybody but if I can get to 2 or 3 a year then, you know, it's paid, it's been worth it." (Mentor 4)

You can't reach everyone
I think we're reaching a lot of the young people
We're getting them
We're reaching them
We're changing their outlook
We're opening their eyes

I might not be able to reach everybody
I can get to 2 or 3 a year then
You know it's been worth it

The 'I' poems reveal how the mentors believe that the people that they mentor do benefit from the intervention and the mentors do seem to be getting through to the mentees, however the issue is that the intervention cannot go wider and cannot reach more young people to make the effects more wide-ranging and the deterrence of crime more likely nationwide.

6. Policies and Procedures
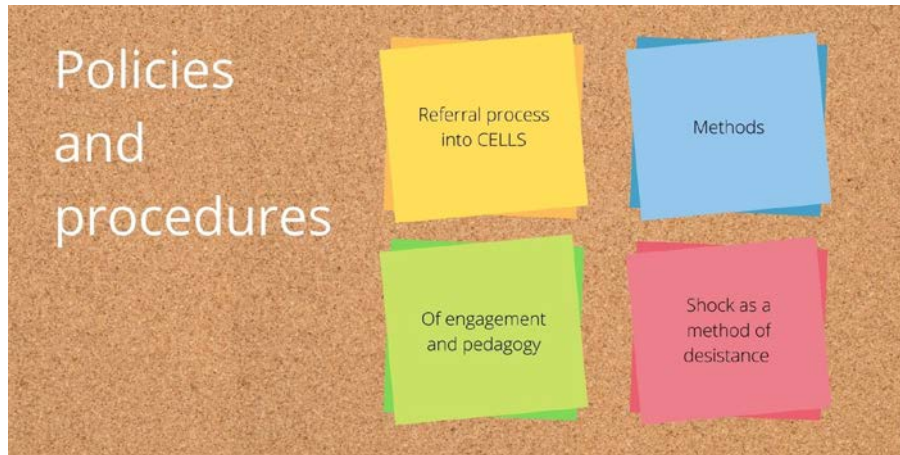
a) **Referral**

After conducting observations and conducting interviews with school staff and C.E.L.L.S. staff, it became known that a clear referral pathway into both the mentoring service and the awareness days provided by C.E.L.L.S. was missing from the organisation. The referral pathway appeared to be confusing, with multiple referral pathways being evident.

 "Usually we get a referral through for a young person who has been flagged up as wanting, or being offered the mentoring. This will be from a variety of different agencies so that could be erm through the police...it could be the youth offending team...it could be via the school they attend or the erm the PRU or anything like that. Also we can get direct referrals as well from erm young people's parents or guardians or things like that, if they feel that they would benefit from it." (Mentor 1)

 This reveals how there is a need for one referral pathway into the services of C.E.L.L.S. to be established, to ensure all referrers understand the process, enabling this to be smoother and adhered to by all. In addition, this would facilitate smoother ongoing lines of communications with those that had chosen to refer.

b) **Methods**

 Through conducting observations on the awareness days provided by C.E.L.L.S. to schools, it became apparent that several methods were used to present the information to the young people. The main three methods identified, other than the traditional method of verbal presentation, was: storytelling, game playing and role playing. These methods were used in conjunction to more traditional methods, enabling all young people, including SEN (special

educational needs) young people, to understand and participate in the day and the activities within the day.

c) **Of engagement and pedagogy**

The pedagogy of C.E.L.L.S is largely received positively by participants and are detailed in five categories; 1. Unique; 2. Relational; 3. Multisensory; 4. Dialogic; and 5. Pastoral. Comments were also made around the attributes of children participating in sessions having high levels of SEND, which C.E.L.L.S are sensitive and flexible towards due to their interaction and versatile approaches.

- UNIQUE: Unique way of learning about the impact of crime – made the learning more valuable/impactful over the short term.

- RELATIONAL: Relational methods to education/learning – making connections to mentors, mentors telling their story and personalising the experience.

- MULTISENSORY: Interactive activities i.e. asking children to guess criminality of staff was an engaging way to encourage children to make connection between crime, 'normal people' and the local area. Which further challenged notions about crime happening 'out there', to 'other people'. Teachers mentioned that other orgs with only visual learning resources were not enough to impact children.

For our learners and multisensory learning is really, really important, and one of the great things about the C.E.L.L.S project is it's very, very multisensory. They are. They are short sessions. And there's lots of active participation. There are resources that students can can touch and can look at, so we're allowing our students and then obviously they they move around school in the sessions, which allows our students grade breaks and processing time. (School teacher 2)

· DIALOGIC: C.E.L.L.S opens dialogic and safe spaces to talk about taboo issues, to express their own experiences, mindsets and preconceptions about crime. The awareness days act as a starting point for these discussions.

· PASTORAL: In relation to mentoring, support and guidance rather than instruction was valued and ensured that pupils continued to attend their C.E.L.L.S meetings.

d) **Shock as a method of desistance**

Across the field, desistance is now understood as a process rather than an event (Bushway & Paternoster, 2009). C.E.L.L.S recognises the process of desistance via a two-pronged intervention approach. First, C.E.L.L.S deters through Crime Awareness Days, and second, mentoring is offered to support desistance. Referral generally happens in conversation with schools or through observations made by C.E.L.L.S staff members during Awareness Days,

who also report particularly vulnerable young people. Via these approaches, C.E.L.L.S encourages young people to practice self-awareness during sessions but opportunities for deterrence and supporting desistance are limited due to their temporality and the need for further scaffolding. 'Shock as a method of desistance' has also been identified as another limitation due to growing evidence supporting its inefficacy (Lewis, 1983; Yarborough 1979; Finckenauer, 1982).

The topics typically covered in Crime Awareness Days represent 'shock as a method of desistance' in a number of ways; 1. Prison life; 2. Gun, Gang and knife crime; 3. Exploitation; 4. Family perspective; 5. Joint Enterprise. From C.E.L.L.S' own reports it is understood that some of these topics need to be 'diluted' by the team to make them age appropriate. For example, a 'prison weapon board' is utilised during the session on 'Prison life'. This board features examples of instruments used in prisons by offenders on other offenders, featuring DIY utensils that have been fashioned to cause serious bodily harm. Across educational services it is commonplace to scale learning resources to cater to different age groups, however, it could be argued that the use of this board would be shocking to any group. We are concerned that by using this learning resource C.E.L.L.S may unintentionally create a spectacle for children and young people to gawk at or exclaim over in horror, thus overriding any educational component.

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to explore and report on the processes and impact of the work of C.E.L.L.S on young people in Merseyside. During this evaluation, it has become clear that C.E.L.L.S has an undisputable impact on the young people of which they work with, which could not and is not currently mirrored by any other organisation. Participants all spoke extremely highly of C.E.L.L.S and were all aware of the level of impact of which the organisation has. The role of experience within the mentoring intervention was expressed as being of upmost importance, in addition to the role of education in the work delivered by C.E.L.L.S. The impact of C.E.L.L.S. is explored within the findings section, connoting how their impact is on both a macro and micro level and is felt by all young people engaging. The main impact of C.E.L.L.S. was described as being the ability to make young people realise, which is a key aim of the organisation itself. Although barriers present themselves and demands of the job are described as being high, the evaluation reveals how the work of C.E.L.L.S. and the educational nature of their work is pivotal in a society whereby youth crime is so severely high. Recommendations are provided within the evaluation and if followed, could help C.E.L.L.S. to advance further in their aim to reduce youth crime within Merseyside. The organisation shows extreme promise and should consider their efforts so far as a huge success.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented to C.E.L.L.S can be categorised into 4 main areas. These are recommendations regarding: school awareness days, mentoring, policies and procedures and structure, processes and systems.

1. School Awareness Day Recommendations

- C.E.L.L.S to provide schools and teachers with lessons to teach prior to the awareness day to prepare the young people for the awareness event and after the awareness day to ensure the message is enforced and reiterated to the young people. This will allow the momentum of the awareness day to continue past the day itself, with teachings being reiterated and

staff working to deliver the impact in relation to the young people, their decisions and choices.

-C.E.L.L.S. to consider developing the awareness days as part of a wider event/package. When forming a relationship with schools in which awareness days are conducted, offer the day as part of a package of services of which the schools can utilise. For example, mentoring, online videos, events, more frequent visits to the school etc. This will make C.E.L.L.S. a more holistic experience rather than just the one-day visit. This will enable a long-term effect to be generated as repetition enables the message to be understood and processed.

-C.E.L.L.S. to aim to go into younger school years to conduct awareness days as research shows the most successful programmes are those which target children from a very young age.

2. Mentoring Recommendations

- C.E.L.L.S. need to create an agreed process for terminating relationships and need to ensure all mentors follow this agreed process.

-C.E.L.L.S. should reconsider their open-door policy as it is shown to negatively impact mentors and may therefore need to be neglected to prioritise mentor wellbeing

- C.E.L.L.S. should ensure focus is centred on education as this is highlighted as being of upmost importance. C.E.L.L.S. should establish a list of educative areas of which to focus upon with mentees and deliver these sessions during the intervention.

3. Policy and Procedures Recommendations

- There needs to be a clearer referral path into mentoring following the awareness days in schools. There should be an easier and quicker way to refer children from the schools conducting awareness days to the mentoring service to ensure no child 'slips through the net'. C.E.L.L.S. may want to consider adding the referral process into their website.

- Policies should be contained in the one space which is accessible to all mentors and staff to ensure they are aware of the policies and are adhering to them within their everyday work. These policies should be provided to staff/mentors in a physical copy so they can refer to them when needed.

- C.E.L.L.S. should schedule a regular meeting with team to discuss any issues/doubts. This would guarantee that all members are working with the same tools and knowledge and are all on the same page. These meetings of reflection need to be recorded and used in a useful way to certify positive changes in the future.

-C.E.L.L.S. should hold professional development reviews and debriefs on a regular basis.

-C.E.L.L.S. should offer regular support and offer team members who may require it one-to-one sessions.

- C.E.L.L.S. should consider 'buddying up' staff and mentors to allow them to experience each others sessions to enable their best practice to be shared. This would also allow staff members who were more specialised in certain areas to share their knowledge, enabling the whole team to possess this knowledge on a basic level.

4. Structure, Processes and Systems Recommendations

- C.E.L.L.S. to consider a restructure on systems and processes in place to allow for cleaner delivery and for clarity within the organisation and its members.

- C.E.L.L.S. to review and develop board of trustees. Academics in the field of Criminology should be included on the board in order to offer a new insight into the organisation and ensure it is acting in accordance with current academic literature.

- C.E.L.L.S. should introduce a new system to capture data more accurately. For example, on awareness days, there should be one data collector and one storer to ensure the data is safely collected and stored. C.E.L.L.S should capture this data at the end of the day rather than this being a school task, as this would ensure data was not lost and was correctly captured. A new storage system, such as 'Views', could be tested and utilised.

- C.E.L.L.S. should implement a support system for both C.E.L.L.S members and C.E.L.L.S Project Manager, to enable a place where both mentors and workers can either talk through their issues once a month in a safe space or where people can go to gain support. This is essential to prevent burn-out.

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