



what works centre for
local economic growth

Toolkit Apprenticeships Mentoring

What is it?

Apprenticeships are positions of paid work in a firm including training provided by the employer, typically leading to a formal qualification or title. They are provided in different forms across a variety of countries. Mentoring is the provision of support by one person (the mentor) to another less qualified person (mentee) normally working in the same field or sharing similar experiences. A mentor can act as a guide for the apprentice, providing them with advice on completing their apprenticeship as well as future career options and progress. The nature of the mentor/mentee relationship varies from programme to programme, and can be tailored to suit the needs of participants, e.g. mentors may be chosen to be from the same community as mentees.

How effective are support measures?

We found one study that looks at the effect of mentoring on completion, finding positive effects. We found one study that looks at the effect on uptake, suggesting that the availability of a mentor does not increase the likelihood that firms can fill apprenticeship vacancies.

One study looked at the effect of mentoring on improving skills levels and on measures of wellbeing. It found that mentoring during an apprenticeship may help to develop the skills level of apprentices but has much less impact on other factors such as self-esteem, well-being, alcohol or drug use.

How secure is the evidence?

This toolkit summarises the available ex-post (i.e. after introduction) evaluations on the impact of mentoring. We focused on evaluation evidence from OECD countries, in English. We considered any study that provided before and after evidence; or cross-sectional studies that compared individuals receiving support to those not receiving support (or that compared those receiving different levels of support). We also included more robust studies that compared changes to participants with a suitable control group. That is, we included evidence that scored 2 or higher on the Maryland Scale.¹

Generally, the evidence base on mentoring is very weak. More rigorous studies are required. We found no systematic reviews of effectiveness and no meta-analysis.

We found 3 studies that looked at the impact of mentoring support. One of these studies looked at uptake, one at completion and the third at other apprentice outcomes. These studies considered apprenticeship programmes in Australia, Sweden, the United States and Switzerland.

Is mentoring cost-effective?

None of the three studies provide any assessment of the costs of mentoring provision, or of the wider economic cost-effectiveness of mentoring support through apprenticeships.

Things to consider

- *Should mentoring support be focussed on disadvantaged groups?* Two of the studies we found that showed some positive effects looked at programmes that were targeted at disadvantaged groups.
- *What is the objective of providing mentoring support?* Mentors may be most effective in addressing issues directly related to the apprenticeship rather than personal or social issues.
- *Are there ways of providing mentoring support that could increase effectiveness?* Our toolkit on counselling in employment training suggests that mandatory counselling may be less effective than voluntary counselling. It may be the case that these findings generalise to mentoring for apprenticeships.
- *How could we better pilot and test the effectiveness of mentoring?* It would be relatively easy to undertake high quality evaluation that would provide us with better evidence on the effectiveness of mentoring in supporting apprenticeships.

1 <http://www.whatworksgrowth.org/resources/the-scientific-maryland-scale/>

Annex: Evidence on Mentoring for Apprenticeships

What kind of evidence do we consider?

The aim of our toolkits is to summarise the available ex-post (i.e. after introduction) evaluation evidence on particular aspects of policy design. We consider a wider range of evaluations than for our evidence reviews. But we continue to focus on finding and summarising evaluations that identify effects which can be attributed, with some degree of certainty, to the support provided.

Our objective is to assess the quality of, and summarise the lessons from, the available evaluation evidence in a way that can help inform policy decisions. We focus on summarising the findings from available evaluations, while recognising that additional sources of evidence may play an important role in making good decisions around support provided in any specific context.

This toolkit looks at the evaluation evidence on the impact mentoring within an apprenticeship. We looked for evidence on the impact of mentoring as the provision of support by one person (the mentor) to another less qualified person (mentee).

We focused on evaluation evidence from OECD countries, in English. We considered any study that provided before and after evidence; or cross-sectional studies that compared individuals receiving support to those not receiving support (or that compared those receiving different levels of support). We also included more robust studies that compared changes to participants with a suitable control group. That is, we included evidence that scored 2 or higher on the Maryland Scale.²

Using these criteria, we found 3 studies that looked at the impact of mentoring support for apprentices on a variety of factors (completion/cancellation of apprenticeships, uptake of apprenticeships, skills level post apprenticeship and other social factors). These studies considered a number of different schemes (two studies considered individual schemes in Australia and Sweden, another study considered mentoring in the context of national apprenticeship systems in the United States and Switzerland and compares the impacts between these two countries).

The studies use a range of methodologies and vary in terms of their robustness. Two papers conduct a before-and-after comparison, with controls for demographic characteristics (SMS2). The third study uses an Instrumental Variables (IV) approach which we scored an SMS 3.³

How effective are support measures

One study that looks at the effect of mentoring on completion finds positive effects

Study AP73 (SMS 2) looks at the impact of mentoring provided to indigenous Australian apprentices upon apprenticeship completion between 2006 and 2011. While 'classic' mentoring programmes tend to be formal and structured in nature, this programme in Queensland had a number of unique

2 <http://www.whatworksgrowth.org/resources/the-scientific-maryland-scale/>

3. The IV approach may score a maximum of SMS 4 however in this case the instrumental variable of 'previous contact with a firm' is not considered to be plausibly exogenous.

characteristics. All the mentors were “mature-aged Indigenous Australians of some standing in their respective communities” and mentors were able to be contacted outside of working hours. Results show that Indigenous apprentices who participated in the mentoring programme have a drop-out rate that is 82% of those not participating in the programme.

One study that looks at the effect on uptake, suggests that the availability of a mentor does not increase the likelihood that firms can fill apprenticeship vacancies.

Study AP75 (SMS 3) explores the impact of the Südwestmetall employer association coaching programme in Germany on number of open vacancies in apprenticeships. The programme sought to support apprenticeship training of disadvantaged youth between 2010 and 2013 through one-on-one coaching from a social worker. Social workers, financed by the employer association, offer coaching, additional lessons in vocational and general subjects (math, German) and social skill training for apprentices at participating firms during the first training year. The paper finds no significant short-term direct effect of firm participation in the programme on the overall number of open vacancies for apprentices. This suggests that the mentoring element does little to help firms fill apprenticeship vacancies.

One study looked at the effect of mentoring on improving skills levels and other measures of wellbeing. It found that mentoring during an apprenticeship may help to develop the skills level of apprentices but has much less impact on other social factors such as self-esteem, well-being, alcohol use or drug use.

Study AP74 (SMS 2) looks at the impact of mentoring in the Swiss apprenticeship system against that in the US part-time working system upon a series of self-reported indicators for skills, self-esteem, well-being, alcohol and drug use. The paper does not provide detail on mentoring systems in the two countries, but sets out that European apprenticeships involve formalised training and educational experiences that include on-the-job learning as well as specialised classroom instruction. As part of the educational process, apprentices work 3 or 4 days a week on the job in their selected trade and 1 or 2 days in school. On the other hand, in the US many high school students work in part-time employment, which is more common than the formal apprenticeship. Common features shared by US part-time workers and European apprentices include job-specific training, and mentoring by adults. Mentoring is found to have a positive effect on skills levels generally, accounting for 29% of the skills variation in Swiss youth and 25% in American youth. The results for other indicators are much smaller, explaining only around 1%-2% of the variation in those outcomes in the Swiss sample. For the US sample the magnitudes are similar but statistically insignificant, most likely due to the much smaller sample size. These findings suggest that mentoring in both US part-time working and Swiss apprenticeship programme have a larger impact on skills than they do on self-esteem, well-being, alcohol use or drug use, perhaps reflecting the possibility that work-orientated mentors may be most effective in addressing issues directly related to the apprenticeship.

Cost Effectiveness

None of the three studies provide any assessment of the costs of mentoring provision, or of the wider economic cost-effectiveness of mentoring support through apprenticeships.

References and study numbers

Ref. No	Reference
73	Trendle, B. (2013) The effect of a Mentoring Program on Indigenous apprenticeship completion in Queensland, present at the 22nd National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference, Queensland.
74	Vazsonyi, A. and Snider, J. (2008) Mentoring, competencies, and adjustment in adolescents: American part-time employment and European apprenticeships, International Journal of Behavioural Development, Vol. 32 (1), pp46-55.
75	Mohrenweiser, J and Pfeiffer, F, (2009), Coaching disadvantaged young people: Evidence from firm level data, ZEW discussion paper Number 14-054, pp27

This work is published by the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, which is funded by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department of Communities and Local Government. The support of the Funders is acknowledged. The views expressed are those of the Centre and do not represent the views of the Funders.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the report, but no legal responsibility is accepted for any errors omissions or misleading statements.

The report includes reference to research and publications of third parties; the What Works Centre is not responsible for, and cannot guarantee the accuracy of, those third party materials or any related material.



HM Government