

Peer Mentoring: Year 1 Collective Impact Report (Mid-Point Evaluation)



1. Evaluation Approach

The front-end evaluation conducted an impact assessment on the design and approach of the Peer Mentoring programme in Fearnhill and The Highfield Schools. This included teacher engagement and mentor recruitment and training. The overall evaluation questions for the Peer Mentoring programme will remain for year 2 as the programme continues to work to a theory of change and programme outcomes. The overall evaluation continues to measure against these goals and ambitions and should be considered as a supporting measure alongside existing data and monitoring methods for the schools' mental health and wellbeing provision. The end of year impact report is a continuation of the front-end evaluation, using baseline data, best practice, and programme implementation, to share learnings for the benefit of the project team and collective impact group. It remains mid-point, as the programme will continue into year 2. The framework has been informed by the programme deliverables and theory of change.

2. Summary

The mentor training delivered by GRIT to Year 10 and Year 12 students proved valuable and impactful, with students being able to articulate learnt skills through presentations to school leadership teams and the Heritage Foundation's all staff meeting. The newly recruited mentors overcame challenges to design and launch a mentoring space and have started to apply their skills to building relationships with student mentees.

It is evident both students and teachers value the peer mentoring offer; however, timetable pressures and teachers' time constraints remain an ongoing challenge. The GRIT team remain integral to the motivation and



engagement of mentors, and a transition to a school-owned offer should be considered by the project team throughout year 2.

3. Evaluation Overview

The purpose of an end of year evaluation is to better understand how schools can use specialist expertise to deliver peer support to improve young people's wellbeing and mental health. This end of year evaluation will also present learnings ahead of the development of delivery of Year 2 of the programme. This end of year evaluation will be measuring against:

- 1, National research and evidence.
- 2, Learnings and recommendations agreed from the project's front-end evaluation.
- 3, Research questions based on the project's theory of change.
- 4, Principles for engagement, including the Treseder's Degree of Participation.

Theme	Research Question
Benefits and outcomes for the schools.	1. How was the peer support programme implemented and who was involved? 2. What were the enablers and barriers to delivery? 3. What were the perceived wider benefits to the school community?
Benefits and outcomes for students.	1. How was peer support experienced by participating students, including youth voice? 2. Has peer support been effective in reducing low-level issues reported to teachers?

	3. Has student wellbeing improved through accessing peer support?
Collective impact.	1. Has peer mentoring support connected students to wider learning and wellbeing opportunities across Letchworth Garden City? 2. Has the design and implementation of the programme worked successfully as a collaborative project? 3. How has the project been made sustainable?

Methodology:

A mixed methods approach was used for the evaluation, cross analysing quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Methodology	Purpose
GRIT Training – written feedback reflections (Peer Mentors)	To better understand successes and challenges of delivering and implementing a peer mentoring model in a school setting.
Supervision Logs	To understand themes of concern being shared by mentees, including changes of check-in and check-out scores. To understand the time required of mentors, including the mentors' own check-in and check-out scores,

	to better understand and protect the mentors' own wellbeing.
Wellbeing self-check-in and check-out (owned by GRIT).	Measurement to be shared separately to this report but will support findings for future developments.
Student Participation Survey	To understand and acknowledge student voice through the perspective of participation and non-participation.
Engagement numbers across the programme and offer.	To understand and measure capacity for the programme, and the engagement numbers needed to drive success.
Engagement Survey: Participating Teachers.	To understand and measure teacher engagement and to identify where support is needed.
End of Year Written Reflections (GRIT & School Leads)	To understand if expectations of the school have been met.

4. Actions from Front-end evaluation:

Programme Design	Based on recommendations for schools to identify a measure for success, this is yet to be actioned for purposes of this evaluation. However, Schools can consider how the findings from this evaluation can support the
------------------	---

Equality Impact Assessment	school's understanding of the Peer Mentoring offer within the wider school provision. Equality impact assessment not yet carried out based on recommendations.
Mentor Recruitment	- Triage process in place at both schools, with School Leads managing and directing the referral process. - School Leads have oversight of mentee and mentor engagement. - EDI monitoring could be considered for mentors to ensure equity of opportunity and representation?
Recognition	Mentors have received a Mentor pin badge and will be rewarded with an experience day.
Monitoring of low-level issues	Low-level issues being reported to the Wellbeing Coaches through supervisions. School leads continue to have oversight of referrals.
Teachers	Restricted staff capacity continues to be acknowledged as a challenge.
Messaging	More consideration is being given to the dissemination of

	information, so that participating staff and students are fully briefed. A role description for Mentors will also support a more accurate interpretation of the role and programme.
--	---

‘icebreaker’ activities to encourage conversation around emotional health and wellbeing.

- C) Schools took their time to raise awareness of the project, including generating referrals, so that the peer mentoring could begin with a good flow of engagement.
- D) One school evolved their peer mentoring programme to solely support Year 6-7 transitions. This enabled better management and expectation.

5. Enablers for Success and Common Barriers to Engagement - Based on National Research

This research has remained a point of reference throughout the first year of programme implementation.

Successful School Engagement:

- It has been recognised that staff engagement went across departments and divisions including: SLT, Teacher, SENCO, Learning Mentor, Inclusion Coordinator, Family Liaison, Wellbeing Coordinator, Safeguarding Lead. This increased all school awareness.
- Training workshops and written guidance materials for all staff were very effective. These workshops generally took place before the peer mentoring began.
- The approach of co-producing peer mentoring with the young people was embraced by staff and seen as a great advantage.
- Some schools committed to awareness raising for students through
 - A) Supplementary themed activities as part of PSHE time – including conversations around friendships and wellbeing. As part of this session students would be signposting to Peer Mentoring offer.
 - B) Mentors/ and or project leads ran special assemblies at points throughout the academic year, which included

Non-participation (Mentees and Mentors):

- From several case studies, the main factor for non-participation shows that peer mentoring was simply not offered to students. The main findings suggest that having more information would have increased this take up (mainly by mentees).
- Another finding for non-participation was due to stigma- *“I was worried what people would think.”*
- One study flagged that it was important for mentors and mentees to have ‘things in common’ otherwise student age gaps did create some challenges. Some mentees also found it hard to ‘open up’ to people they didn’t know (via a drop-in format).
- Overall, greater reassurance around confidentiality, privacy and discretion was needed (for both mentors and mentees) to increase participation.
- Reliance on self-referrals were also not enough. Similar pilots were seeing a low take-up for drop-in sessions. Some pilots introduced referrals from teachers which also improved wider school awareness and the promotion of health and wellbeing services across the school.

Challenges for Staff Engagement:

- Many case studies stated that it proved difficult for teachers to commit to regular formal arrangements.
- A lack of staff time, time tabling clashes and resource constraints, also proved difficult for peer mentoring programmes to embed as a whole school approach.

Challenges for Parental Engagement:

- Some peer mentoring projects limited engagement with parents simply to information sharing and consent seeking (photograph permissions).
- When engaged the main concerns shared by parents were
 - A) The prospect of their child discussing family and home life was seen as intrusive.
 - B) The mental health theme also deterred some parents.



6. Delivery of Peer Mentoring Training

Between November 2024 and January 2025, GRIT's Chief Executive Officer and two Wellbeing Coaches, delivered six two-hour workshops for the newly recruited Peer Mentors at The Highfield and Fearnhill Schools.

Working on a two-week timetable, the schools agreed that training would take place within periods 1 and 2 at The Highfield School and periods 3 and 4 at Fearnhill School. For some students this would mean missing lessons, for others the training fell within free periods.

It was noted by a teacher during this delivery, that timetabling had proved challenging due to the missing of lessons, particularly for some of the Yr 12 Mentors. It was agreed during this period that this aspect of the programme would need to be reviewed for Yr 2 to minimise the disruption of lessons.

Five of the sessions delivered the Four Corners Method, supported by a Mentors Handbook and resources. Students were encouraged to actively participate in the training, using the *check-in* method and confidentiality agreement to fulfil their obligation as a Peer Mentor and embrace the GRIT approach.

All students shared positive reflections to their training, noting skills or areas of the Four Corners Method that interested them the most.

*"I liked learning about my emotions."*¹

"[I liked learning about] how to support peers and making a comfortable environment for all of the school."

"[I liked learning about] the empowerment triangle."

¹ Student reflections from Peer Mentoring Training

[illegible]

The sixth session was observed for the purposes of evaluation, when both schools were able to apply their knowledge to the design of their in-school offer. This was an opportunity for youth²voice within the project – the student Mentors were active in the shared decision-making process. Both cohorts demonstrated enthusiasm, commitment, and ownership of their wellbeing offer, with notable consideration of their approach and accessibility to other students. Overall, both cohorts wanted to see more mentors joining the offer, and to maximise the visibility of their offer.

³ Feedback from trained Peer Mentors

On the training, Lead GRIT Coach reflected ⁴*“we had some really lovely moments. They’re [Mentors] are quite committed and that’s essentially what we want.”*

7. Implementation of Peer Mentoring Offer

Mentors of Fearnhill School wanted to incorporate their Peer Mentoring offer within the school's existing services delivered by the Student Support Study Centre and Inclusion Room. The Peer Mentoring space, a disused office within the school, re-named 'The Corner', was designed to be multi-use, shared with the school's Pastoral Team.

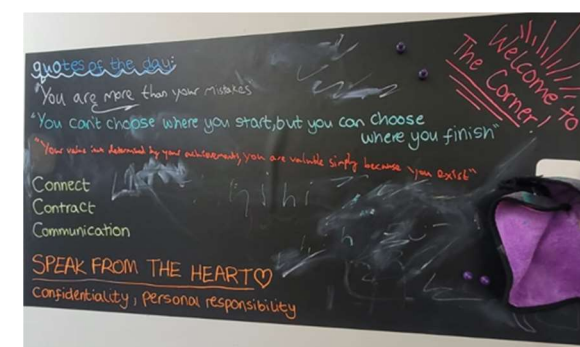
⁵ Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions with Children: Treseder's Degree of Participation Model.

Mentors from both schools launched their mentoring during February's *Children's Mental Health Week* and advocated their offer through school assemblies and presentations to SLT. The Mentors relied on the support of staff for mentee referrals, and the wrap-around support of the Wellbeing Coaches delivered by GRIT.

On presenting their mentoring offer to the school's senior leadership team, GRIT's Wellbeing Coaches reflected *"They really got the concept and they really managed to explain quite well."*

It is evident that both schools heavily relied on the expertise and motivation of GRIT's Wellbeing Coaches, to implement the mentoring offer, and that this layer of support needed to be consistent. During a short window within the academic year, both schools were able to effectively launch their peer mentoring offer with mentors building relationships with student mentees. Sessions were delivered as 1-1 but also as a group, with mentors valuing the co-facilitation with other mentors. Please refer to *'enablers to success and barriers to engagement'* on page 5

Although an obvious time to pilot the offer, break and lunch times did not always work for both mentors and mentees, with both cohorts wanting to keep their breaktime for themselves. Some mentors also struggled to effectively communicate to student mentees with SEND, a consideration raised in the front-end evaluation with action suggested for year 2.



Images top left and right; the outdoor mentoring space at The Highfield School. Images bottom left and right; 'The Corner' mentoring space at Fearnhill School.

8. The Mentor Experience



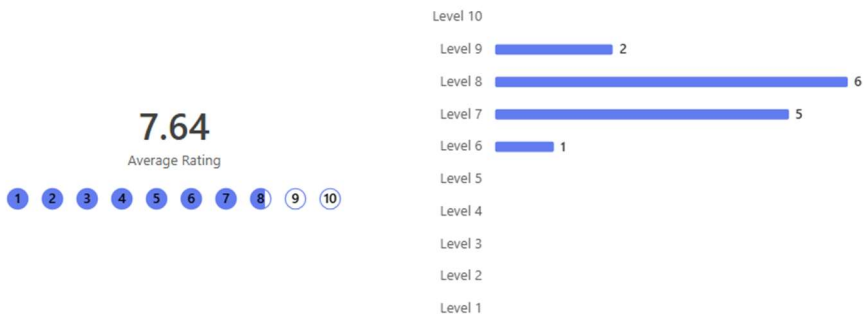
Stock image

Of the 20 Mentors who received initial training, 14 mentors completed the end of year feedback (11 from The Highfield School, 3 Fearnhill School).

Of those who responded 48% of Mentors scored their Mentor experience 8/10, with an overall average rating of 7.64.

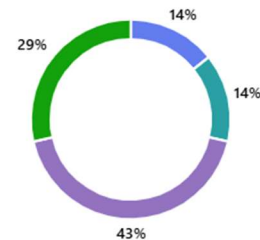
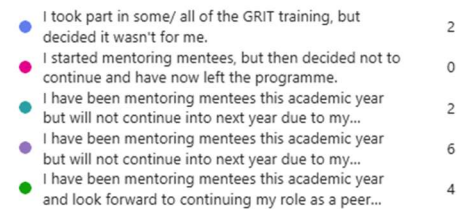
12. On a scale of 1 - 10, with 10 being very valuable, how valuable has your experience been as a Peer Mentor?

[Mor](#)



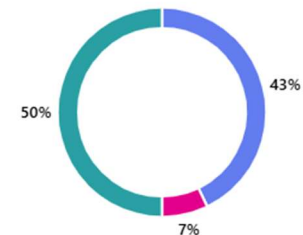
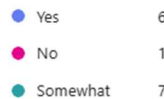
Of those who responded 29% of trained mentors aim to continue their role as a Peer Mentor in Year 2. 43% do not plan to continue in their mentoring role in Year 2 but will be supporting the next cohort of mentors through training.

14. How much of the Peer Mentoring experience did you participate in?



Of those who responded, 43% of active Mentors actively apply the four corners method to their work with mentees. 50% somewhat apply the approach, and only 7% stated that they did not use the four corners method – however this was stated by Mentors who are no longer part of the programme.

15. Do you feel you have continued to apply the Four Corners Method to your work as a Peer Mentor?



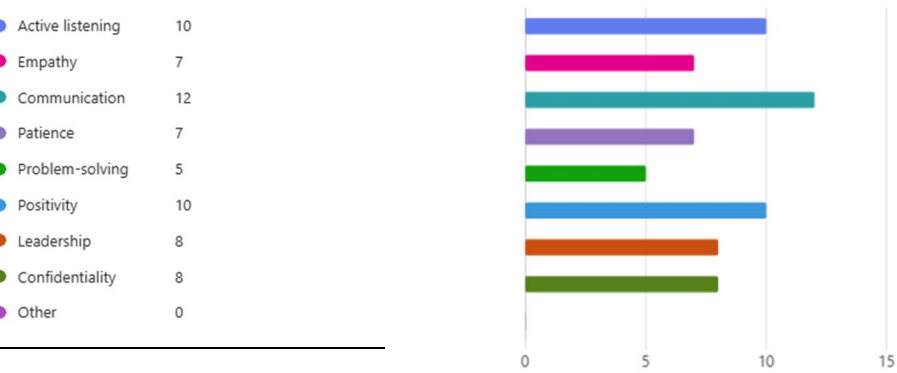
Of those who responded, 57% of active Mentors sometimes refer to the Mentor handbook, compared to 29% who rarely refer to handbook and 7% who refer to the handbook often or very often.

16. How often did you refer to the Peer Mentoring Handbook?



The acknowledgment and articulation of skills has been another consideration in this project, with *active listening, communication* and *positivity*

17. What skills do you feel you have gained as part of the Peer Mentoring programme? Please select all that apply.



⁶ Student Participation Survey
⁷ Student Participation Survey

Overall, the experience for mentors in terms of confidence building and skills development is evident through mentor and teacher feedback. Mentors have acknowledged their ability to apply the four corners method into practice and managing difficult situations differently.

⁶*"there is other methods of dealing with situations."*
⁷*"The most important thing that I will take forward from this experience is the fact that I will be able to help other people in need even if I don't know them."*

However, the need for more mentors was evident to alleviate demand, as shared by teaching staff, and should be a consideration for year 2.
⁸*"Time is always a barrier in school, there has been quite a demand on the mentors but hopefully with the opportunity to train more mentors next year this will spread the load."*

9. The Mentee Experience (small sample consideration)

Four mentees from KS3 answered the survey, one mentee did not agree for their answers to be recorded in this report. Further engagement with existing mentees would strengthen the quality of this sample.

Of those mentees who responded, this year’s mentees received information on Peer Mentoring through their teacher, through posters, and through school assemblies.
 All who responded met with their Peer Mentor between 4-6 times and agree that seeing a Peer Mentor had been beneficial, rating the experience

⁸ Teacher Advocacy and Support

on average 7/10. When asked how they would recommend Peer Mentoring to a friend, one Mentee shared ⁹*"It helped me express my feelings and opinions on my life."*

One mentee did suggest they were accessing Peer Mentoring during teaching hours, which could be taken into consideration for Year 2 to avoid class disruption.

¹⁰*"I'd say it's helpful but it takes you out of classes that you need."*

The themes of concerns shared between Mentee and Mentor were recorded by GRIT's Wellbeing Coaches, who shared that mentees are visiting through initial curiosity and mainly seek guidance around school-related concerns, including not being able to stay focused and not enjoying the demands of school.

One Wellbeing Coach shared that the Mentors at Fearnhill School suggested offering the support for GCSE subject choices, which the Wellbeing Coach supports. This may target yet widen the appeal for prospective mentees.

10. Themes From Non-Participation (small sample consideration)

Permission was not given for individual responses to be included in this report. Themes for consideration include a lack of awareness and feelings of embarrassment. Also included is a need for more information on the Peer Mentoring offer, and more clarity around the confidentiality of information.

⁹ Mentee responses in the end of year Student Participation Survey.

¹⁰ Mentee responses in the end of year Student Participation Survey.

Please see section '*enablers for success and barriers to engagement*' on page 5

11. Teacher and Whole-School Engagement

The project continued to be supported by the school project leads from the Senior Leadership Team, who collectively rated GRIT's Mentor programme 9/10, and agreed that the experience had positively impacted the trained Mentors' wellbeing and personal development.

¹¹*"The training was great, the students expressed how much they enjoyed it and felt that it really changed the way they thought about things personally and gave them the tools to work with others."*

With the project only launching in the Spring Term, both schools agreed that with more time they felt confident the Peer Mentoring offer would be effective in reducing the number of low-level issues being reported to teachers. However, both schools have started to measure the impact of the programme through existing monitoring of waiting lists for mental health support, Fearnhill School's wellbeing survey, and the collective impact evaluation shared through the collective impact project team.

Time allocated to support the programme continued to be a challenge for staff leads. This was acknowledged by both schools and the GRIT's Wellbeing Coaches.

¹²*"Schools are always time poor and this challenging to always fit this in but the regular meetings have helped to keep the lines of communication going."*

¹¹ End of Year Reflections for School Leads.

¹² End of Year Reflections for School Leads

“[A barrier to success] is time for staff in school to support.”

Teacher engagement, first measured during the formative stage of the programme, continued throughout the academic year. GRIT continued to advocate the programme to increase awareness amongst school staff. This has been identified as a key enabler of previously piloted peer mentor programmes.

It has proved evident that both school-led Peer Mentoring programmes need additional support within school, to continue at its best ability and capacity. One school benefitted from the support of a Designated Safeguarding Lead who attended the training session in the Autumn Term. Having an additional staff member advocating for the offer across the school, along with providing support with mentee referrals and the setup of the permanent mentoring space. Again, time proved challenging for the support teacher, and ongoing support has been required of the GRIT team, however the programme is clearly valued by teaching staff.

¹³“The enthusiasm of the mentors has made setting up the programme a starting success something that will continue through the next school year and beyond. Having the support from those that work for GRIT has made the process easier and enjoyable.”

Embedding a whole-school acknowledgement and advocacy of the project has made significant progress since the launch in February, however through end of year reflections, it is evident this promotion needs to continue throughout year 2, including any new teachers with GRIT’s training day.

¹³ Peer Mentoring: Teacher Advocacy and Support.

¹⁴“[It is recommended] GRIT to deliver refresher sessions to staff that have completed the training, so the knowledge stays current.”

12. Recommendations

Programme Oversight and Coordination

1. Consider how a centralised space for the project, such as Padlet, could be utilised for the sharing of information across the collective impact group.
2. Define roles and responsibilities across the project team to better ensure effective management of the project across a collective impact group.
3. Schools to map the peer mentoring offer against existing provision for mental health and wellbeing, to strengthen the programme’s offer going forwards.

Parental Engagement

1. Rescheduling a parental engagement as agreed with the project team, considering opportunities such as existing parent wellbeing classes, parents’ evenings and the school newsletter.

Mentor Recruitment and Training

1. Determine a role description and commitment agreement for the Peer Mentors, also considering a skills framework for learning and skills recognition such as Unifrog Competencies or Skills Builder.

¹⁴ Peer Mentoring: Teacher Advocacy and Support

Skills and competencies identified by existing Mentors can be shared to support this development.

2. Widen the pool of Mentors so the commitment can be shared more broadly amongst students. (Project Team in agreement.)
3. Consider scheduling mentor availability during form time, removing the commitment during regular break and lunch periods which have proved inconvenient to both mentors and mentees.
4. Where necessary, consider incentives for Mentors to use their lunch and break times for the promotion of their Mentor offer.
5. Reorganise the training delivery over a shorter period to minimise class disruption and allow more time for the offer to be further developed. (In agreement)

Mentor Offer and Delivery

1. Consider how the contents of the Mentor handbook could be more regularly accessed.
2. Consider how the application of the Four Corners Method can continue to remain front and centre of the Mentor's approach going forwards.
3. Consider suggestions presented by existing mentors and Wellbeing Coaches, to improve mentee engagement. This includes more focused support for Year 10 and 11 students such as exam preparation and stress and managing challenging virtual spaces. Please refer to *'enablers for success and common barriers to engagement'* on page 5
4. Consider how student voice can be embedded in the approach as the programme evolves and moves forwards. Roundtable discussions with existing mentors to be rescheduled for early September.

5. To ensure inclusivity, assess peer support requirements for additional learning and behavioural needs.

Mentor Recognition

1. Consider how recognition can build on existing acknowledgements. Mentor suggestions include a letter of recommendation, honorary badges. There could also be the opportunity to recognise skills more formally.

Teacher Engagement and Capacity

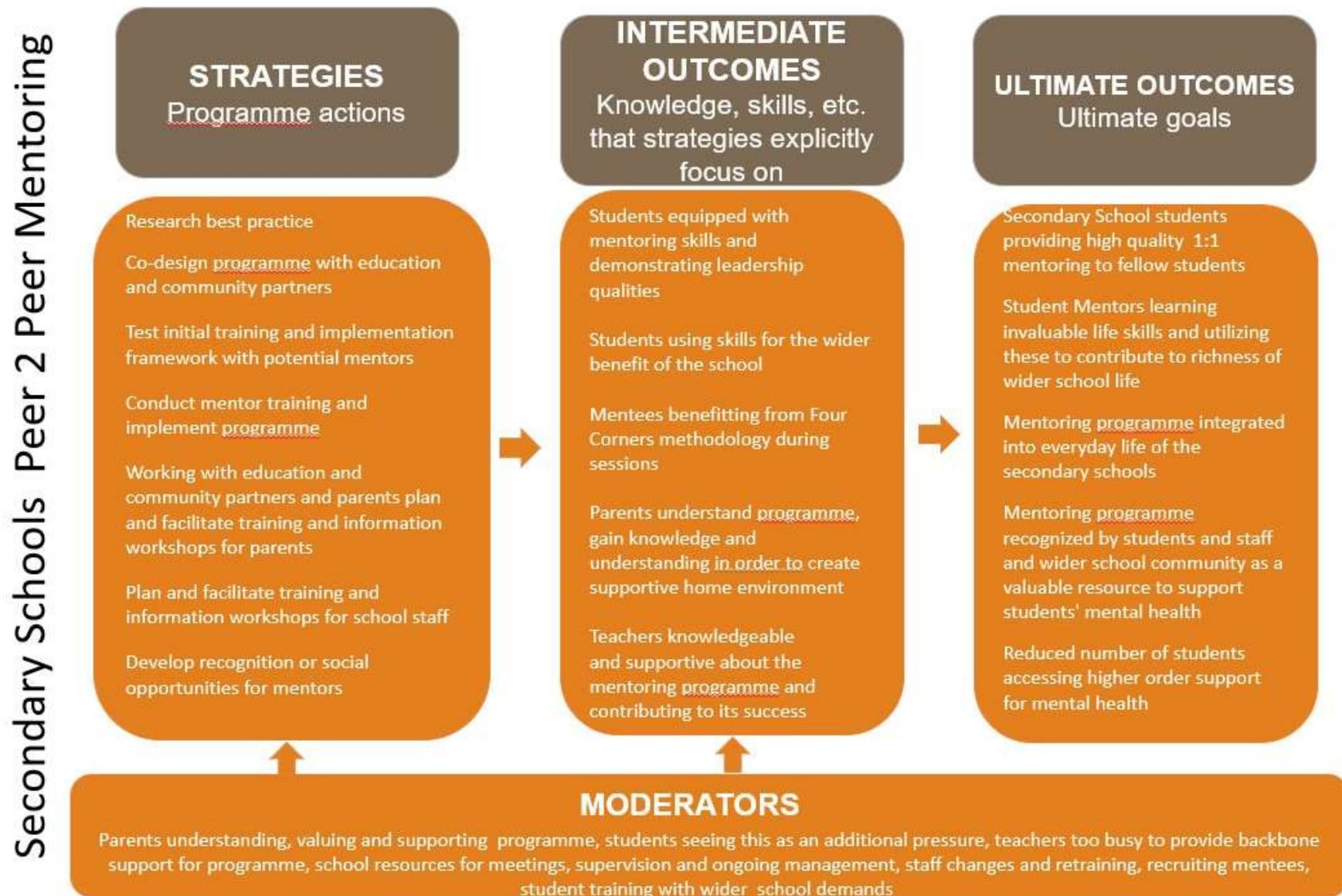
1. Consistently promote the Peer Mentoring Programme through all available channels including staff email lists, daily bulletins and meetings, and making the mentoring spaces visible in the school calendar.
2. Mapping roles and responsibilities within the project team to see where additional resource can be applied to support teacher engagement and programme oversight.

Ongoing Measurement of Impact

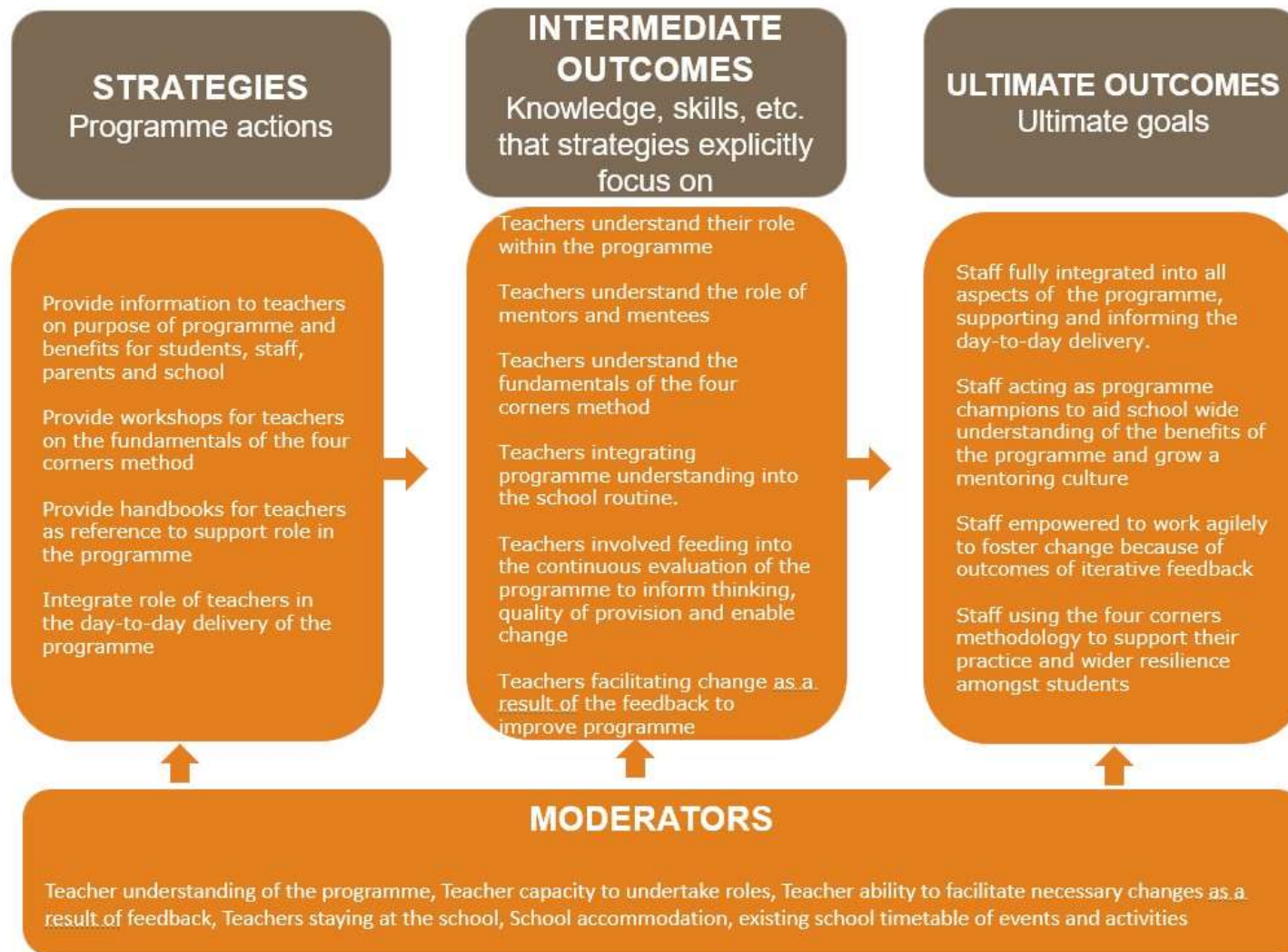
1. Fearnhill to consider including questions on the impact of Peer Mentoring as part of the school's annual wellbeing survey.
2. Schools to share measurements of success during the next academic year, 25-26.
3. LGCHF to share impact reports of similar projects delivered elsewhere. This will support programme development.

Pathways

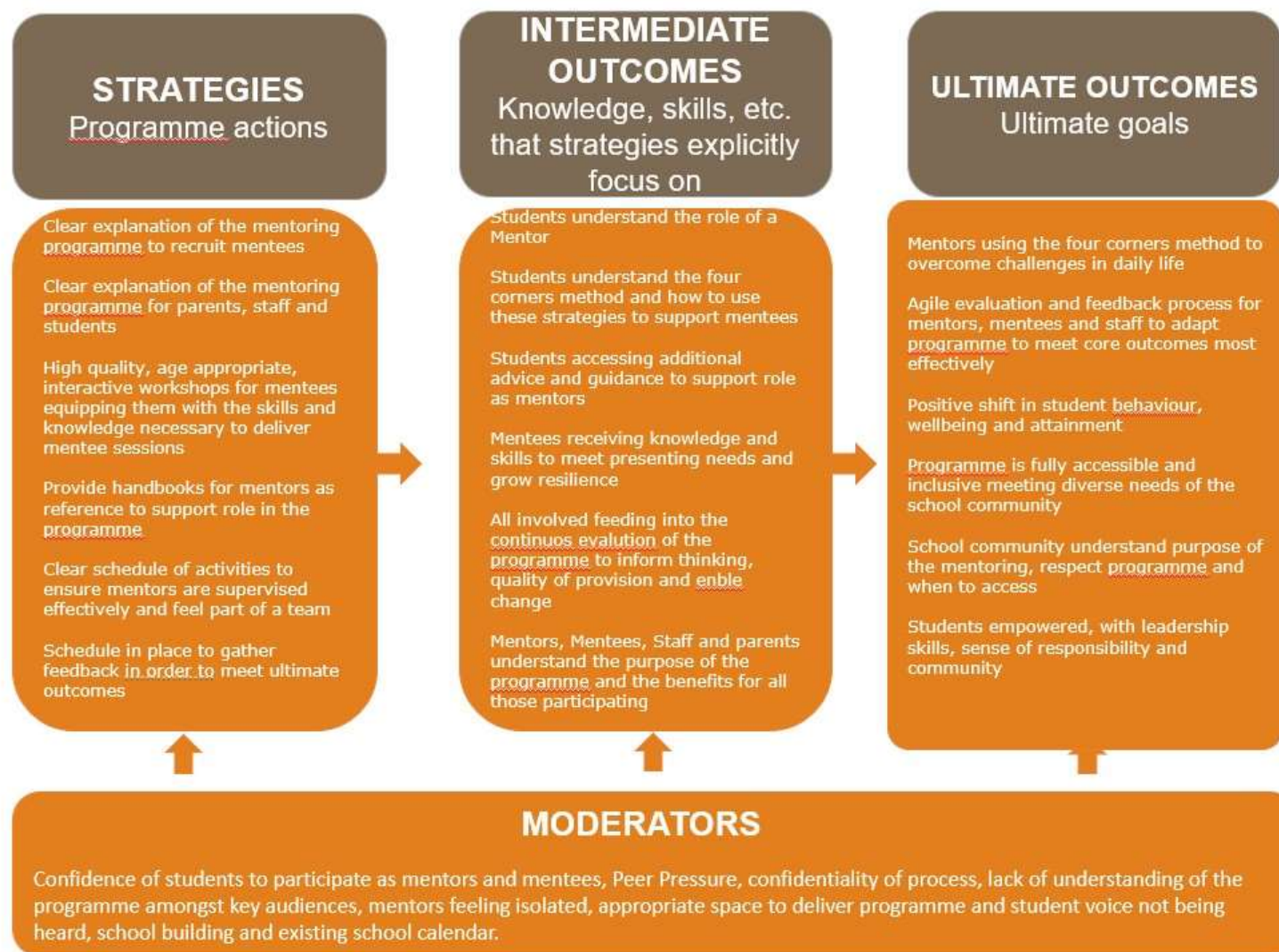
1. Consider progression pathways for Mentors, accessing enrichment and youth voice opportunities within the town.



Staff Role Strategy



Student Mentor Strategy



Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation Questions

1. How effective was the peer mentoring programme? Was the programme implemented as planned?
2. What gains did young people make in relation to skills, personal development and improved wellbeing?
3. What value did the peer mentoring bring to wider school provision for emotional health and wellbeing? Did the benefits of the programme extend to students' home life and parental engagement with the school's services for emotional health and wellbeing?

Approach and Method

This evaluation design will include mixed methodology. The evaluation questions guided decisions regarding data sources and choice of methods to collect and analyse data. All student data will be anonymised. The following methods and data collection procedures were as follows:

1. Desk-based research to contextualize the Peer Mentoring Programme, including supporting data from Family Support Services. This also includes a master theory of change, and theories of change for each project strand.
2. Baseline and impact surveys for student mentors and mentees.
3. Baseline surveys and end of project self-report from School Leads.
4. Check-in and out wellbeing assessment for mentors and mentees.
5. Supervisions with Wellbeing Coaches (monthly observational feedback)
6. Parental engagement to be scheduled for Year 2
7. Semi-structured interviews with Project Leads through round tables and project review meetings
8. Non-participation surveys

Evaluation Monitoring Responsibilities

1, GRIT (GT) 2, School Pastoral Lead (PL) 3, LGCHF (HF) 4, All Delivery Partners (ALL)

Nb. All images of students featured in this impact report are stock images.