SMLP Interim Report: Qualitative Process and Impact Assessment

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Contents

Executive summary

Background

The Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme (SMLP) aims to support and improve the outcomes of care experienced young people, and those in 'tough realities' (such as those on the cusp of care, young carers, and those living in SIMD 1 or 2 areas). SMLP is one of several initiatives aiming to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. It is predicated on the idea that young people can be empowered by developing their relationships with family, friends and adults in the wider community, and that more relational forms of support will enhance well-being and develop young people's and their families' capabilities, thereby improving their short, medium and long-term outcomes.

There are two strands to SMLP: MCR Pathways and Columba 1400 Young People's Leadership Academies (Columba 1400 YPLAs):

- MCR Pathways is a school-based mentoring scheme. The scheme engages S1 and S2 pupils in group work and then matches them with a mentor from the local community, who meets with them in school, once a week, from S3 onwards. The intervention aims to improve attainment and staying on rates for S5 and S6 pupils, as well as supporting young people to develop key life skills. By doing so, the aim is to increase the number of young people in full-time work, college or university after leaving school (known as "positive destinations").

- Columba 1400 YPLA provides values-based leadership experiences for young people. These are delivered in three phases over the course of S2/3 (starting with group work in school, followed by a residential trip to Skye at their purpose-built community and international leadership centre, then a group project back at school). It aims to support young people to develop leadership skills, create better relationships and improve confidence and wellbeing so they can lead lives of purpose, meaning and contribution.

Following early evidence from an independent evaluation that MCR Pathways has had a positive impact on outcomes and capabilities, the Scottish Government and the Hunter Foundation agreed to invest additional funding to expand MCR Pathways and roll it out over a six year period (from 2021/22 to 2026/27). Alongside this, Columba 1400 would deliver values-based leadership training to young people via their YPLAs.

It was envisaged that the two schemes would complement each other in many schools, with schools involved in MCR being encouraged to participate in Columba 1400 as well and vice versa.

Aims and methodology

The aim of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of SMLP. There are three main strands to the evaluation, which explore:

- The delivery of the programme
- The impact on 'hard' outcomes (attendance, attainment, staying-on rates and positive post-school destinations) and on capabilities which young people have said matter to them (such as increased social confidence, increased health and well-being, and better relationships).
- Value for Money (VfM) - assessing the costs against monetised benefits (including the longer-term benefits to wider society).

This report uses qualitative data to explore both process and outcome findings, addressing the evaluation questions in relation to the reach, implementation and impact of the programme (see Appendix 1 for the Evaluation Framework and Theory of Change). It will later be complemented by a quantitative impact assessment (see next steps below).

The findings in this report are based on visits to four secondary schools; two taking part in MCR Pathways (for S1 to S6 pupils) and two taking part in Columba 1400 YPLA (for S2 and S3 pupils). The schools were selected with the aim of achieving a mix in terms of local authority area, geographic location, rurality, proportion of care experienced pupils, proportion of pupils living in the most deprived areas (SIMD1), school size, and whether the schools were non- denominational or Roman Catholic.

In total, 75 qualitative depth interviews were conducted with pupils, parents/carers, MCR mentors, Columba 1400 delivery staff and teachers, as well as with local authority and national stakeholder representatives.

Key findings

Impacts

There is qualitative evidence that both interventions – MCR and Columba 1400 – have had a positive impact on the young people who have taken part in them.

Increased confidence was identified as one of the main impacts of both interventions, particularly in relation to increased social confidence and self-belief. For those participating in the MCR intervention, this increase in confidence was attributed, in part, to encouragement from mentors and MCR Co-ordinators. These individuals were described as 'patient', 'non-judgemental', and 'reliable' which allowed them to build strong relationships with pupils. For those participating in the Columba 1400 intervention, the group work, in particular, was felt to have encouraged young people to speak to their peers and helped them feel more comfortable in group settings.

The other capabilities identified as having been most impacted by the MCR intervention included increased academic confidence, increased attainment/achievement and confidence in doing well at a job in future. These were felt to be closely linked with increased social confidence.

There were, however, also some pupils for whom mentoring seemed to have made little difference, either because they perceived themselves to be doing well across the capabilities already or because they still appeared to be struggling with confidence and were not comfortable opening up to their mentor.

The impact of the Columba 1400 YPLA was described as 'powerful', 'affirming' and 'transformational'. Increased social confidence and self-belief underpinned many of the other capabilities that pupils felt the YPLA had improved. These included belief in their abilities, increased social capital, and feeling more involved in school decisions. Broader impacts of the intervention were also noted, including the embedding of a mentoring and leadership culture in the schools (e.g. through encouraging wider discussions about values) and benefits for staff who took part (e.g. developing their leadership skills).

Reach

Both interventions were generally considered to be reaching the young people in schools who would benefit most from them.

Reaching the care experienced young people who are the most disengaged from school, however, was identified as a key challenge for MCR Pathways. As a school-based scheme, it was recognised that MCR cannot be expected to reach young people who are not at school. Nevertheless, this highlights the additional disadvantage faced by this group.

In relation to the Columba 1400 YPLA, a reflection among staff in some schools who reported a lack of engagement from care experienced young people, was that these young people might be targeted more directly in the future to encourage greater participation.

Implementation

It was generally agreed that both of the interventions had been implemented as intended.

Aspects of the MCR Pathways implementation that were seen to be working particularly well included:

- Co-ordinators being members of school staff so they were better able to raise awareness of the intervention, work closely with other staff members and build positive relationships with pupils, so avoiding duplication of work already being done by Pupil Support Assistants. This was also felt to help Co-ordinators build relationships with pupils.

- Co-ordinators introducing the scheme to young people, which had helped ensure it was communicated effectively.

MCR taking the lead on Co-ordinator and mentor recruitment, since it was reported that local authorities would struggle to find the resource for this and MCR have the experience and expertise to do this well. The main implementation challenges identified in relation to MCR Pathways were the cost to local authorities of employing school Co-ordinators in a challenging financial environment, and attracting and retaining the right staff for temporary contracts.

Aspects of the Columba 1400 Young People's Leadership Academy that were seen to be working particularly well included:

- The positive relationship between Columba 1400 and schools facilitated by the flexibility of the intervention (e.g. school staff considered Columba 1400 staff to have a clear understanding of their school's needs and to have tailored the YPLA accordingly).
- The professionalism and skills of Columba 1400 staff in getting to know the young people, understanding their needs and building trust from an early stage.
- The timing (i.e. taking place over S2/S3), pace and content of the intervention.

The main implementation challenge for the Columba 1400 YPLA was the process of selecting young people to take part, due to the limited number of places and the target criteria (set by the Scottish Government) of 10 young people who are care-experienced or in tough realities. Engaging care experienced young people was felt to be a particular challenge because either there were not any in the year group to begin with, or because of their suitability to take part in the YPLA at that point. This underscored the importance of schools being responsible for the selection of young people as they know pupils' individual circumstances and what is appropriate for them, while also factoring in the target criteria.

Implementation of the SMLP programme overall

Despite the individual strands being implemented as intended within schools, the research found that the speed and scale of rollout of the SMLP overall has adapted over time and has been considerably more limited than originally intended. Stakeholders indicated that the main reason for this was the much less favourable fiscal climate which had developed since the start of the programme. It was suggested that the original funding model, which required matched funding from local authorities/schools, was no longer sustainable.

In addition, the original vision of the two strands complementing each other within schools has not materialised. Cost is, again, likely to be a major factor with schools/local authorities feeling that they cannot justify funding two interventions in the same school. One national stakeholder questioned how much this mattered if both interventions were delivering what schools wanted (albeit separately).

Suggestions for improvement

The suggestions for improvement given by participants of this research were largely practical considerations specific to each intervention.

For MCR Pathways these included:

- Additional support for mentors (e.g. opportunities in the early stages to have a one-to-one conversation with an experienced mentor, greater signposting of resources, evening training sessions and more use of online breakout rooms, more information on what school is like for young people nowadays, and where to find information to advise young people on post-school opportunities).

- Providing more information to parents on the types of activities involved in the intervention and a little more information on their child's mentor.

- Establishing formal end of year meetings between MCR and school staff to review the impact of the intervention.

- More active promotion of MCR Pathways in their area by Co-ordinators.

- Involving young people in Co-ordinator recruitment.

- Ensuring Co-ordinators can access school IT systems.

- Mentors and mentees being able to meet outside school settings.

For Columba 1400, these included:

- Giving more information to school staff and parents to explain what the YPLA would involve.

- Having a greater number of sessions in phase one (which comprises group work in preparation for the residential).

- Although the five day residential in Skye was generally considered to be the right length, there was a view that spending slightly more time at the residential would be beneficial.

Next steps and recommendations

The next steps for the evaluation are to conduct an interim quantitative impact assessment and an interim Value for Money assessment of MCR Pathways (reporting in March 2025). Following further qualitative fieldwork (on both the MCR

and Columba 1400 strands) in autumn 2025 and quantitative/Value for Money analysis in winter 2025/26, the final evaluation report is due in March 2026.

Recommendations for possible additional steps for Scottish Government include:

- If the forthcoming quantitative analysis and Value for Money assessments of MCR Pathways are positive, review the funding model (including exploring alternative sources of funding both within and outwith the Scottish Government) to enable MCR Pathways to be rolled out further and sustained.

- Conduct an evaluability assessment of the Columba 1400 YPLA to assess the feasibility of a quantitative impact and Value for Money assessment, which could then inform future funding decisions.

Chapter 1: Policy background, aims and methodology

Policy background

In July 2023, there were 12,206 Looked After Children under 18 in Scotland.[1] While education outcomes for looked after children have improved considerably over the last 10-12 years, there is still a notable gap between them and their non-care experienced peers.

The Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme[2] (SMLP) aims to support and improve the outcomes of care experienced young people, and those in 'tough realities'. SMLP is very much in line with The Promise made in 2020 to the country's most vulnerable children following the Independent Care Review. The Promise sets out what Scotland needs to do "to make sure its most vulnerable children feel loved and have the childhood they deserve." One of the foundations of The Promise is People:

> "The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care."[3]

SMLP is one of several other initiatives aiming to improve the wellbeing of children and young people, such as Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), and it aligns with the preventative agenda set out in Best Start, Bright Futures, the Scottish Government's delivery plan for tackling child poverty.

Central to the SMLP is the idea that young people can be empowered by developing their relationships with family, friends and adults in the wider community, and that more relational forms of support will enhance well-being and develop the capabilities of young people and their families, thereby improving their short, medium and long-term outcomes.

Following early evidence from an independent evaluation[4] that MCR Pathways (one of the main strands of SMLP) has had a positive impact on outcomes and capabilities, the Scottish Government and the Hunter Foundation agreed to invest additional funding to expand MCR Pathways and roll it out over a six year period

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[1] Children's social work statistics 2022-23 - looked after children (This is down 15.6% from July 2020 when there were 14,458 Looked After children and when plans for the SMLP were first developed: Children's social work statistics 2020-21)

[2] Throughout this report, we use 'programme' when referring to the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme as a whole. When referring specifically to the either of the two strands (i.e. MCR Pathways and the Columba 1400 Young People's Leadership Academy) we have referred to these by name, or as the 'intervention' or 'scheme' where it is already clear which is being discussed.

[3] Independent Care Review - the plan

[4] MCR Pathways Social Bridging Finance Initiative for Educational Outcomes Evaluation Report

(from 2021/22 to 2026/7) to a much larger cohort of young people. Alongside this, and in partnership with MCR, Columba 1400 would deliver values-based leadership training to young people in schools via their Young People's Leadership Academies (YPLAs). It was envisaged that the two schemes would complement each other in many schools with, for example, schools involved in MCR being encouraged to participate in Columba 1400 as well – and vice versa.

The funding model was intended to act as a catalyst: supporting take-up in areas where MCR and Columba 1400 were not embedded already – by providing part funding for three years[5]. It was intended that this would give sufficient time to demonstrate impact, after which schools/local authorities (or other funders) would commit funding to sustain the programme.

Intervention overviews

MCR Pathways

MCR Pathways[6] is a school-based mentoring scheme that seeks to improve the life chances of care experienced young people. The overall aim of the intervention is to increase the number of young people in full-time work, college or university after leaving school (known as "positive destinations"). In doing so, the scheme aims to improve attainment, and staying on rates for S5 and S6 pupils, as well as supporting young people to develop key life skills.

There are two broad groups of eligible pupils:

- Group one: young people who are currently or have previously been in care. These pupils are prioritised for support. These pupils are initially identified via the school's information management system, known as SEEMiS, and then each individual's potential participation is discussed by the Co-ordinator and school staff who know the pupil (e.g. guidance and pupil support staff).

- Group two: other young people who may benefit from the intervention (i.e. those in 'tough realities'). These young people are identified by school staff.

All eligible young people are free to decide whether or not to take part in the whole intervention, or parts of it.

Schools have an MCR Pathways Co-ordinator located in the school who supports pupils and mentors, working closely with other school staff members. In S1 and S2, young people take part in weekly group work sessions with the Co-ordinator. These

[5] The original model was to fund 50% of the cost of MCR for each participating school for three years, which was then 'matched' by the local authority or school who provided the school-based co-ordinator. After this period, the local authority/school would be expected to fund the intervention in full on the basis of evidence of impact. The full cost of running a YPLA is £30,000 and schools would receive funding to cover two-thirds of this. Note that the funding went to MCR and C1400 and not directly to the local authority/school.

[6] MCR Pathways home page

sessions focus on building confidence, life skills and improving literacy and numeracy. It is intended that the Co-ordinator builds trust and an individual relationship with each pupil at an early stage in their secondary school journey. Co-ordinators can also support the transition of pupils from P7 to S1.

Pupils are then matched with a mentor from S3 onwards[7]. This is intended to provide more one-to-one support. Mentors are volunteers from the local community with a range of different backgrounds who receive training from MCR. They are not required to have any specific qualifications or prior experience working with young people. Pupils and mentors are matched based on their personalities, skills and interests, and the pupils' career aspirations.

Columba 1400

Columba 1400's Young People's Leadership Academies[8] provide values-based leadership for young people, The Columba 1400 scheme is delivered in three phases over the course of S2/3. Some schools have ongoing engagement with Columba 1400 and have taken part in the scheme multiple times with different year groups.

Phase one

In phase one, the selected pupils meet with Columba 1400 staff, typically over three to four sessions (ranging from a couple of hours to a full day), in the weeks leading up to the phase two residential. The delivery of phase one is tailored, with more sessions, staggered sessions, or fewer combined sessions, depending on the needs of each school. The purpose of phase one is to introduce the cohort to values-based leadership, to provide opportunities for the young people to get to know each other and to help them prepare for the residential. Pupils take part in a range of activities, including team-building exercises, discussions about leadership and mental health strategies, learning about Columba 1400's core values, and a 'values walk' designed to provide an informal environment for young people to explore their own values.

Phase two

In phase two, pupils, accompanied by three or four members of school staff, go on a residential trip to the Isle of Skye and stay at the community and international leadership centre in Staffin with Columba 1400 staff for five days. From the point of arrival, with the "welcome meal", there is a focus on high quality treatment and providing a safe space for the young people where they will be treated with respect.

Each day focuses on one of the Columba 1400 values: awareness, focus, creativity, integrity, perseverance and service. The schedule includes a mix of

[7] This may vary when a school first joins the MCR. For example, those already in S2 when the school joins will not have group work in S1 and those in S3 and above may be matched with a mentor without having done the group work. In some cases, pupils are matched with a mentor in S2 if there is a high enough need for support.

[8] Columba 1400 Young People's Leadership Academy web page

group and individual exercises, indoor and outdoor activities (including a search and rescue activity where pupils are split into two teams and have to find a dummy and transport it back to the centre), as well as discursive and more reflective work (e.g. journalling). The activities are grounded in different leadership models and are designed to encourage young people to "live their values".

Towards the end of the residential, the group is introduced to phase three which is a project they will work on when they return to school.

Phase three

After returning from the residential, the young people give a presentation to the school's senior leadership team to summarise their experiences. Supported by Columba 1400, the young people decide on a community-based or school-based project that they want to work on, develop a plan for this, and deliver it together (sometimes as one group delivering one larger project or in smaller groups delivering two or more smaller projects). At this point, Columba 1400 staff typically take a step back to allow the young people to carry out their project – but they provide ongoing facilitation if needed. The purpose of phase three is to further embed values-based leadership by enabling young people to put the skills they learned in phases one and two into practice.

Evaluation aims

The aim of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme (SMLP), which includes both the Columba 1400 Young Peoples' Leadership Academy and the MCR Pathways interventions. There are three main strands to the evaluation which explore:

- The delivery of the programme
- The impact on 'hard' outcomes (attendance, attainment, staying-on rates and positive post-school destinations[9]) and on capabilities (such as increased social confidence, increased health and well-being, and better relationships) which young people have said matter to them
- Value for Money (VfM) - assessing the costs against monetised benefits (including the longer-term benefits to wider society)[10].

The evaluation will identify ways in which the outcomes of care experienced young people can be further improved and what wider lessons can be learned. The research is guided by an Evaluation Framework (see Appendix 1), which sets out the evaluation questions and the primary sources of evidence that are being used to answer each question.

[9] The impact on 'hard' outcomes will be assessed for MCR Pathways only as it would not be possible to construct a robust control group for the Columba 1400 YPLA.

[10] Again, this will be assessed for MCR Pathways only as Value for Money analysis requires robust data on 'hard' outcomes.

This report uses qualitative data to explore both process and outcome findings, addressing the evaluation questions in relation to the reach, implementation and impact of the programme. The evaluation will also include a quantitative assessment of impact and a VfM assessment (see Future outputs below).

To support evaluation of the programme, a Theory of Change was developed during the Evaluability Assessment undertaken in 2021. It sets out a theoretical underpinning for understanding how the programme is intended to impact on the capabilities of young people (e.g. social confidence, health and wellbeing, relationships). Split into 'doing' and 'being' capabilities, these were largely derived from what young people themselves said was important to them. The Theory of Change has been used in conjunction with the Evaluation Framework to guide the design of data collection materials, analysis and reporting. Both can be found in Appendix 1.

Methodology

This report is based on 75 qualitative depth interviews conducted with pupils, parents/carers, MCR mentors, Columba 1400 delivery staff, and teachers in relation to either the Columba 1400 Young Peoples' Leadership Academy or MCR Pathways, as well as with local authority and national stakeholder representatives.

Sampling and recruitment

Four schools were visited in this phase of the research: two taking part in MCR Pathways and two taking part in the Columba 1400 YPLA. The aim had been to visit a further two schools during this phase. However, due to recruitment challenges, this has not yet been possible.

The schools were selected with the aim of achieving a mix in terms of local authority area, geographic location, rurality, proportion of care experienced pupils, proportion of pupils living in the most deprived areas (SIMD1), school size, and denomination. MCR schools were also selected on the basis that they had begun the scheme in 2021/22 or earlier in order that there were pupils at the school who had taken part in the group work element as well as those who had taken part in mentoring.

The aim is to visit the same schools again in year four of the evaluation in order to explore longer-term impacts.

After the schools were selected, the Scottish Government wrote to the Director of Education in each local authority to secure permission for Ipsos to contact the school directly. Ipsos then wrote to the headteachers to inform them about the research and to request their school's participation. The research team then liaised with school staff to facilitate a visit to the school.

Each school helped with recruitment of pupils, parent/carers and school staff. MCR schools also helped recruit mentors. To recruit pupils, Ipsos asked the school to list pupils taking part in the relevant intervention alphabetically by gender and assign them a number. Schools were asked to exclude any pupils from the list who they

felt would not be in a position to take part in an interview. Ipsos then randomly selected numbers from the list and asked the school to speak to pupils about the research. Parents/carers were given the option to opt their child out of the research, and also to take part themselves. Any pupil who did not wish to take part was replaced by a non-selected pupil on the list.

Schools were provided with written information to share with pupils, parent/carers, mentors and staff inviting them to take part in an interview. Pupils could also watch an information video about the research (see Appendix 2).

Representatives from local authorities and national stakeholders who were involved in implementation or oversight of the interventions(s) were suggested by the Scottish Government, MCR Pathways or Columba 1400. Individuals were contacted by Ipsos and invited to take part in a virtual interview.

MCR schools

MCR fieldwork covered two schools and included interviews with 20 pupils, four members of school staff (depute headteachers and MCR Co-ordinators), six mentors, and two parents. Among the pupils there were:

- 11 girls and nine boys
- 10 in S2 (who had done group work only) and 10 in S4 (who had received mentoring but not done any group work in S1 or S2 because the MCR Pathways had not yet started in their school when they were in S1/2)
- 9 in MCR Group One (i.e. care experienced young people), 11 in MCR Group Two (other vulnerabilities/reasons e.g. being young carers or being at risk of becoming care experienced).

Columba 1400 schools

Columba 1400 fieldwork covered two schools and included interviews with 16 pupils, five members of school staff (teachers, depute headteachers, and headteachers) and four parents. Among the pupils there were:

- 11 boys and five girls
- 6 in S3 (who had recently returned from the residential[11]) and 10 in S4 (who had been on the residential the year before)
- 1 care experienced young person, and 6 young people who had been selected to take part due to having low social confidence.

Non-school based fieldwork

[11] See Intervention Overviews Columba 1400 section of this report for a description of the residential and other elements of Columba 1400.

Other non-school based fieldwork covered interviews with:

- Eight national stakeholders
- Four local authority representatives in areas delivering one or both interventions
- Six MCR Pathways or Columba1400 staff members.

Data collection and analysis

Interviews took place between November 2023 and February 2024. The majority were conducted face-to-face at schools (including interviews with young people, school staff, mentors, MCR coordinators and parents/carers). Interviews with Columba 1400 staff, local authority staff, national stakeholders and a small number of parents and mentors were conducted by phone/video call. All interviews were facilitated by members of the research team and were recorded for subsequent analysis.

Interviews were structured around discussion guides designed by Ipsos, in collaboration with the Scottish Government. Separate discussion guides were developed for each participant group and explored different aspects of the SMLP to varying levels of detail, depending on the participant's role, but they generally covered:

- Perspectives on the programme aims
- An overview of the programme's delivery
- Perceived impact of the programme
- Aspects that are working well
- Aspects that could be improved

In interviews with pupils and parents, we asked first about the overall impact of the relevant intervention and what difference it had made to young people (either based on themselves or on the pupil(s) participants were talking about). We then explored each capability in more detail using a card sort exercise. A statement related to each capability was printed on a card and the participant was asked to sort the cards into piles depending on whether they agreed or disagreed that the intervention had made an impact in that way, or whether it had made no difference (see Appendix 2 for the list of statements and related capabilities). We then explored the reasons for the selections in more detail. School staff, stakeholders and mentors were shown the logic model and asked to pick out the capabilities where they felt the intervention had made the most difference and where it had made less of a difference.

Note that, when discussing the impact of the interventions with participants, it was apparent that there was some overlap among the different capabilities (for example, “I am more comfortable speaking to other people” and “I feel more confident in social situations”) and that improvements in some capabilities led to improvements in others (for example, feeling less anxious might lead to improved attendance at school).

Data from interviews were summarised into thematic matrices (using Excel, with each column representing a theme, and each row an individual interview, so that the data could be sorted in different ways for further analysis). These were developed by the research team and drew on the evaluation questions. These matrices were then reviewed to identify the full range of views and experiences under each theme.

A note on qualitative research

The aim in qualitative research is not to achieve a sample that is statistically representative of the wider population, but to identify as much diversity of experience as possible. Estimates of prevalence based on qualitative data are therefore inappropriate and this report avoids quantifying language, such as ‘most’ or ‘a few’ when discussing findings from qualitative interviews. The value of qualitative research. in a process and impact evaluation such as this. is that it provides the perspective of those involved on what aspects of the process have worked well/less well, what the perceived impacts have been and how they think those impacts have been achieved. Qualitative research does not attempt to measure the extent of the impact but to set out the range of perceived impacts. The quantitative impact report (see Future outputs below) will provide robust quantitative data on the extent to which MCR Pathways has had an impact on key outcomes.

The structure of this report

The remainder of this report covers emerging qualitative findings on the evaluation questions. Although there are commonalities between MCR and Columba 1400, this report covers findings for each intervention separately as they are different interventions, with different approaches and durations, and it would be inappropriate to compare them directly with each other.

Chapter 2 focuses on MCR Pathways and summarises the perceived reach, implementation, and impact of the intervention on the young people taking part. Chapter 3 looks at the same issues for Columba 1400 Young People’s Leadership Academy. Chapter 4 considers whether the individual interventions, and SMLP as a whole, have been implemented as intended and whether mentoring and leadership have been embedded across the school system. Chapter 5 sets out the conclusions and suggested improvements.

Future outputs

An Interim Quantitative Impact Report will be produced in autumn 2024. This will look at the impact of MCR Pathways on attainment, attendance, staying on rates

and positive destinations. There will be no quantitative impact assessment of the Columba 1400 YPLA because the criteria for selection are such that it would not be possible to identify a suitable control group of pupils.

An Interim Value for Money Report will also be produced in late 2024. This will assess the Value for Money of MCR Pathways.

Following further qualitative fieldwork and quantitative/Value for Money analysis, the final evaluation report is due in spring 2026.

Chapter 2: MCR Pathways

This chapter focuses on MCR Pathways and summarises the perceived reach, implementation and impact of the intervention on the young people taking part. It draws on the perspectives of pupils from two secondary schools who have taken part in the intervention, some of their parents or carers, mentors, the school staff involved, MCR staff, as well as the views of local authority and national stakeholder representatives.

Summary

- MCR Pathways was generally felt to be reaching young people in schools who would benefit most from it. Some local authority representatives mentioned that it is challenging for MCR Pathways to reach those care experienced young people who are most disengaged from school. As a school-based intervention, MCR Pathways cannot be expected to reach young people who are not at school – but this point highlights the additional disadvantage faced by this group of young people.

- The intervention was generally felt to have been implemented as intended. There had been some local changes to school Co-ordinator employment terms and the delivery of group work. These changes were intended to improve delivery in terms of reducing staff costs (and therefore increasing the sustainability of the scheme), and improving staff retention and intervention effectiveness for young people.

- Aspects of implementation that were seen to be working particularly well included:

  - Co-ordinators being members of school staff so they were better able to raise awareness of the intervention and work closely with other staff members, so avoiding duplication of work already being done by Pupil Support Assistants. This was also felt to help Co-ordinators build relationships with pupils.
  - Co-ordinators introducing MCR Pathways to young people, which helped ensure it was communicated effectively
  - MCR taking the lead on Co-ordinator and mentor recruitment, since it was reported that local authorities would struggle to find the resource for this and MCR have the experience and expertise to do this well.

- The main implementation challenge had been the salary cost of employing school Co-ordinators in a challenging financial environment for schools and local authorities, and in attracting and retaining the right staff to work on temporary contracts.

- Increased confidence was a dominant theme when discussing the key impacts of MCR Pathways on young people, particularly in relation to having increased social confidence and having more belief in their own abilities. Increased confidence also underpinned many of the other capabilities that

pupils felt the scheme had improved, such as increased academic confidence, increased attainment/achievement and confidence in doing well at a job in future.

- There were also pupils for whom mentoring seemed to have made little difference, either because they perceived themselves to be doing well across the capabilities already or because they still appeared to be struggling with confidence and were not comfortable opening up to their mentor.
- Mentors were very positive about their experience of the scheme and highlighted that it had made a difference to their perceptions of young people, their own work and their own wellbeing. There were some suggestions for improvements to further support mentors, including: opportunities in the early stages to have a one-to-one conversation with an experienced mentor; greater signposting of peer resources; evening training sessions and more use of online breakout rooms; more information on what school is like for young people nowadays; where to find information to advise young people on post-school opportunities; and greater signposting of resources to help structure mentoring meetings.
- MCR was generally felt to have a positive working relationship with other programmes supporting young people, such as Developing the Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and the Promise, although there was a view that further work is needed to avoid duplication of effort in this space. There was also a desire for MCR Pathways to further enhance work experience and volunteering opportunities for young people.
- Parents who were interviewed were positive about their child taking part, however there was a desire for more information on the types of activities involved and a little more information on their child's mentor.
- Other suggestions for improvement/good practice included: establishing formal end of year meetings between MCR and school staff to review the impact of the intervention; involving young people in Co-ordinator recruitment; ensuring Co-ordinators can access school IT systems; and mentors and mentees being able to meet outside school settings.

Overview of MCR Pathways

MCR Pathways is a school-based mentoring scheme that seeks to improve the life chances of care experienced young people. The overall aim of the intervention is to increase the number of young people in full-time work, college or university after leaving school (known as "positive destinations"). In doing so, the scheme aims to improve attainment, and staying on rates for S5 and S6 pupils, as well as support young people to develop key life skills. A more detailed overview of MCR Pathways is provided in Chapter 1. There was generally a good understanding of the aims of the intervention across the audiences interviewed for this research.

Are participants being reached as intended?

Overall, school staff and stakeholders felt MCR Pathways was reaching young people in schools who might benefit from taking part. Some local authority representatives mentioned that it is challenging for MCR Pathways, to reach those care experienced young people who are most disengaged from school. A school-based scheme such as MCR cannot be expected to reach young people who are not at school – but this point highlights the additional disadvantage faced by this group.

Identifying young people

School staff were responsible for identifying care experienced young people (Group One) and other young people who might benefit from taking part (Group Two). School staff gave examples of those in Group Two, including: young people who are impacted by parents with addiction issues; young people on the child protection register; young carers; young people with severe social anxiety; and young asylum seekers. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of school staff having the flexibility to decide which pupils take part, and trusting schools to make the right decisions.

School staff take a partnership approach to identifying young people. This involves discussions between the Co-ordinator, Pupil Support staff, class teachers and other relevant staff members. The Co-ordinator in one area also mentioned a partnership with a local third sector organisation supporting young carers. This organisation provides details of the young carers at the school and the Co-ordinator discusses with Pupil Support staff whether they would benefit from taking part. In some cases, the school may decide that the young person has “too much going on in their lives” or that the group dynamic would not suit them. However, their participation can be revisited in future. It is important to note that there is not a formal ‘referral’ system and young people have choice about whether not they engage.

School staff are able to identify care experienced young people through SEEMiS. However, one local authority representative noted that there may be Group Two young people, for example those with anxiety, who would benefit, but who have not been identified because they do not have a diagnosis or are not in touch with other sources of support. Participants also noted that school attendance is a barrier to taking part for some young people (discussed further below under Participation).

While all care experienced young people are eligible to take part, participants recognised that not all may need the intervention. An example was given of a care experienced young person who felt that they had enough support at home so did not need a mentor. Others talked about pupils who had some care experience when they were very young but have been settled with their family since then and were doing well.

There was general agreement that MCR Pathways should target these two broad groups of young people because they were the most likely to be disadvantaged.

Communication about MCR Pathways

One stakeholder was concerned that the scheme 'singles out' or 'labels' care experienced young people. However, school staff said they were careful to avoid stigma when introducing the scheme to young people. A Co-ordinator said they do not tell pupils why they have been put forward but instead say that Pupil Support thought they could benefit from extra support. This was reflected in conversations with pupils who often mentioned that they were not sure why they had been picked.

> "I just got the letter and then I met [Co-ordinator] one day. I didn't know why I was doing it, I thought it was just random people that got picked". Pupil, S4, MCR

Pupils interviewed had generally heard about MCR Pathways in person from the Co-ordinator, Pupil Support staff or both. One Co-ordinator felt that it worked best for them to approach young people about taking part because they know most about the scheme so could explain it at an age-appropriate level.

> "We know what our programme's about - and guidance have their own idea of what the programme is and what it does, so they probably put it across more as the positive destination at the very, very end, whereas we want to start at the start and work through it all to get to that positive destination. You can't just force that on someone when they can maybe be S1, S2." Co-ordinator, MCR

Young people interviewed generally did not express an opinion about the process of being told about the scheme.

Parents/carers also receive information about MCR Pathways and must sign a consent form in order for young people to take part. One S2 parent felt they had enough initial information about the intervention and thought it would be beneficial for their child to take part. However, once their child had been taking part for some time, they said that they would have liked further information from the school on the types of activities involved. Another S4 parent commented that they trusted the school when they recommended mentoring but would have liked to have known more about the mentor who would be spending time with their child.

Participation

The MCR Pathways Impact Report May 2024 provides data on the characteristics of young people who took part in the academic year 2022/2023. This shows that:

- 39% of participants were care experienced
- Just over half of all participants (52%) were living in the most deprived areas of Scotland[12]
- The majority (61%) were registered for free school meals[13]
- Two-thirds (66%) had one or more additional support need.[14]

Table 3.1: Profile of MCR participation in academic year 2022/2023

	Percentage young people taking part[15]
Eligibility group	
Group One (care experienced)	39
Group Two (tough realities)	61
Deprivation	
SIMD 1 (most deprived)	52
SIMD 2	19
SIMD 3	14
SIMD 4	9
SIMD 5 (least deprived)	5
Free school meal registration	
Registered for free school meals	61
Not registered for free school meals	39
Additional support needs	
One or more additional support need	66

[12] Percentage of pupils living in 20% most deprived areas (according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)), where SIMD status had been added to the MCR reporting system. For more details of SIMD see here: Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 web page

[13] Where free school meal registration had been added to the MCR reporting system. There are likely to be other young people who are entitled but not registered.

[14] Where additional support needs had been added to the MCR reporting system.

[15] Where relevant data had been added to the MCR reporting system.

Young people interviewed described a variety of reasons for wanting to take part in the mentoring scheme. These included:

- For group work: a desire to make friends or because their friends were already attending; to take part in fun activities; or to develop skills.

- For mentoring: a hope that it would help with their anxiety and mental health; to replace another support activity that had come to an end (e.g. one young person attended groups outside of school to help with their anxiety but these were only available until S2); to have someone they can trust to talk to for advice; for help with school-work; or to help them work out what they wanted to do for a future career.

While some pupils wanted support explicitly related to positive destinations, such as helping them figure out what they wanted to do when they leave school, it was more common for pupils to want support with their wellbeing.

In terms of enablers to participation, young people mentioned that they were able to take part because the timings of the group work or mentoring worked around classes they did not want to miss. School staff observed that young people who had taken part in group work in S1 or S2 were more likely to take up mentoring when they were older. This was because they had developed a relationship with the Co-ordinator and so trusted them when they said that mentoring might be good for them. Young people interviewed enjoyed their mentoring or group work sessions; particular aspects they enjoyed are discussed later in this chapter.

School-based staff interviewed reported that there were no care experienced pupils in their schools who were missing out on MCR Pathways. However, one local authority representative felt that their local authority was not engaging as many care experienced young people as they had hoped. They highlighted that low attendance is a barrier to participation as young people need to be in school to benefit from group work and mentoring. This suggests that some of the most disadvantaged young people are less likely to be able to take part. Care experienced young people living in residential settings were also mentioned as having lower attendance. This local authority representative also said some young people do not see the benefit of taking part and/or are suspicious of another adult who wants to be involved in their life. They noted, however, that schools have been able to support young unaccompanied asylum seekers by MCR securing mentors who speak their language.

Another local authority representative also suggested that some school Co-ordinators in their area are less “embedded” within schools than others. They had encouraged schools to include Co-ordinators in regular Pupil Support team meetings, but this was not always happening. They felt that this impacted on how well staff were working together to identify young people and promote MCR Pathways.

In order to improve reach, one local authority representative mentioned working with MCR on engaging young people who are being educated in alternative provision, and had asked MCR to attend a meeting of their Corporate Parent Board to raise awareness of the scheme.

A school staff member commented that there is not enough support in schools in general – so there will always be more Group Two young people who could benefit. However, in their school, they felt that no care experienced young people were missing out.

Has MCR Pathways been implemented as intended?

Participants felt that MCR Pathways has generally been implemented as intended. However, initially, MCR and some local authorities had different expectations of how the scheme would be rolled out and there have been changes to fit the local context.

Schools usually become involved in the scheme after their local authority agrees to take part. Local authority representatives described their different approaches to deciding which schools in their area would sign up. For example, in one relatively small area, the local authority decided that it would only be fair if all schools took part (with school leadership approval). Another area left it up to headteachers to decide.

An MCR staff member commented that, while implementation needs to be cost effective for MCR, they try to adapt to local needs. For example, they had agreed to start the mentoring process early in one local authority because some schools felt that mentoring would help young people stay engaged in school. However, from the perspective of some local authorities, MCR was described as quite "rigid" in their approach to staffing. For example, one local authority wanted to begin with one or two schools before deciding on wider roll out. However, MCR had required that three or four schools take part to make delivery costs of a regional manager worthwhile for them (the local authority eventually agreed to this)[16].

A key change in intended delivery was around employment of school Co-ordinators. MCR had orginally expected that each school would have a dedicated full-time Co-ordinator, with their salary paid by the school or local authority. MCR believed that this is the best way to deliver on the aims of the intervention, and ensure its sustainability. However, this model was not always followed in practice. Not all schools felt they had enough care experienced pupils to justify a full-time Co-ordinator. For example, in one local authority, schools had initially employed full-time Co-ordinators but this was not financially viable in the long-term. One school had moved to a fixed-term, part-time contract which was seen as more cost effective for schools with a relatively small pupil roll. Local authority representatives

[16] Note that this particular requirement no longer exists in the MCR model.

did, however, highlight that fixed-term contracts are a barrier to hiring and retaining staff.

One local authority representative felt that MCR had only been willing to make compromises to school Co-ordinator employment when the local authority said they might pull out of the scheme.

> "We had to enter into a discussion with MCR because they said that their model is a full-time person, and we said that that's just not going to work for us. We'd said that we're not the same as Glasgow. Our schools [don't have] as big rolls. If you've got a school with a roll of 2,000, they have one person and our school had 400 so we felt it was different." Local authority stakeholder, MCR

MCR now support part-time/flexible Co-ordinator roles.

Some stakeholders also commented on the cost for schools or local authorities of employing the Co-ordinators. They felt this was a barrier to more schools and local authorities taking part, which may impact on the future sustainability of the scheme.

What is working well, less well and what could be improved?

MCR support to schools with implementation

School staff and local authority representatives were positive about MCR's support in the initial implementation stages and with recruitment of Co-ordinators and mentors. MCR staff were described as 'lovely to work with' and 'happy to help'.

A local authority representative noted there had been turnover of MCR staff in their area which affected implementation, and that they had had to chase staff for data which they needed for local reporting.

School Co-ordinators

School Co-ordinators were felt to be key to the success of MCR Pathways. A local authority representative stressed the importance of having a staff member whose sole focus is on supporting the MCR cohort as opposed to Pupil Support staff who deliver universal support to a large cohort. A school staff member highlighted that having continuity of the same Co-ordinator helps them to become "established" in the school which supports information sharing between them and other staff and relationship building with pupils. Pupils were positive about how approachable and understanding their Co-ordinators were.

> "She is like a big sister. You can just go and tell her anything. You know she is not going to be, like, 'oh, what', or anything like that. She will actually support you". Pupil, S2, MCR

As noted, schools appreciated MCR's support with recruiting and training Co-ordinators. In terms of what works well with recruitment, one local authority had

involved young people in interviewing candidates. They felt that this had helped identify candidates who were comfortable around young people. Another stakeholder suggested that it helps with delivery if Pupil Support Assistants move into Co-ordinator roles because they already know the school.

Mentors also highlighted the importance of Co-ordinators to the success of the intervention and in supporting them. They helped by being proactive in checking that meetings have been arranged, updating mentors on whether the young person is in school for their meeting, reminding them to complete feedback forms, and being responsive to questions.

> "I felt I had the information to carry out the role successfully with the knowledge that [Co-ordinator] is hugely accessible, and very helpful, and if I need anything, I just send her a text and she tells me." Mentor, MCR

Some raised practical challenges relating to Co-ordinators being employed by local authorities but managed by MCR. For example, one local authority representative said that there can be difficulties with Co-ordinators accessing school systems. They had had to provide their Co-ordinators with a laptop so they could access training because their equipment (provided by MCR) was not compatible. (Note that MCR would now fund this.)

Group work

The first few group work sessions are about the pupils getting to know each other. The Co-ordinator then focuses on topics such as health and wellbeing, resilience, and team building.

Young people reported that they enjoyed the sessions. One young person said it was like “learning without knowing you are learning”. Specific aspects of the group sessions that young people liked included: being able to have music on in the background and choose what they listen to; spending time with friends; being able to speak to the Co-ordinator; the activities; and being asked what they would like to do in the sessions.

It was clear one reason for the success of the group work was the ‘non-judgmental’ space created by the Co-ordinator. This helped young people to open up during the sessions or feel they could speak to the Co-ordinator privately another time.

> “We will talk about our feelings and how life at our house is going, and if there is anything wrong at our house, and if there is, then we can tell [the Co-ordinator], because we can all trust [her].” Pupil, S2, MCR

To improve the sessions, one Co-ordinator had made some changes to their groups. They said there were some quieter pupils who were not getting a chance to speak so they had split the S2 group into two smaller groups so the dynamic was better for them to be able to contribute.

MCR staff said that they have internal surveys which demonstrate the perceived impact[17] of group work on young people. However, not all stakeholders could see value in group work compared to mentoring. Some local authorities have stopped offering group work[18] or reduced this aspect of the scheme. One local authority representative was concerned that group work duplicated Pupil Support work already happening in schools and would like to see greater collaboration between Co-ordinators and other staff working with the same cohort of young people.

Mentoring

MCR is responsible for mentor recruitment and Co-ordinators are responsible for matching young people to a mentor. This was described as important because local authorities and schools would not have the capacity to take this on.

Participants described a thorough recruitment and matching process, which had helped young people and mentors to build a relationship. This was key to young people's engagement. Young people and mentors answer questions about themselves, and the Co-ordinator matches them based on personality and interests. One mentor noted that they had learnt more about themselves from answering the questions. Stakeholders felt that there are relatively few matches that do not work out. Two young people interviewed had had a change in mentor because their original mentors' circumstances had changed. These young people did not mind because they were happy with their new mentors.

Some mentors felt that it had taken a long time for them to be matched but they appreciated the school Co-ordinator reassuring them that they had not been forgotten, and were happy they had a good match in the end.

Some challenges were mentioned with mentor recruitment. In some areas, it was felt that recruitment takes a long time, which impacts on the number of young people who can take part. Particular challenges were mentioned for rural areas which have a smaller pool of volunteers to choose from, and where there are greater travel times for meetings. MCR was exploring whether it might be possible to offer some remote meetings in rural areas.

Mentors were generally positive about the quality of initial information, training and support. They highlighted the following aspects as working well: videos on the MCR website about the role of a mentor; training on adverse childhood experiences and active listening; being able to discuss case studies; and being provided with several opportunities to "pull out" of the process if they decided it was not for them.

[17] The evaluation will quantify the impact of the programme as a whole, and may be able to identify differences in impact between those who received group work as well as mentoring and those who only received mentoring. However, it will not be able to assess the impact of the group work alone.

[18] In these instances, MCR have run 'mentor prep' sessions - small cluster support sessions for pupils.

A stakeholder mentioned that there have been changes to mentor training so it is less focused on statistics and more on case studies to show the impact of mentoring. There are also now more “focused” activities in the training sessions where mentors can discuss different scenarios.

Mentors did highlight some things that could be improved about the early stages. These included: an opportunity to have a one-to-one conversation with an experienced mentor; more use of breakout rooms in online training; training sessions in the evening so more people can attend; and information about what school is like for young people nowadays.

Pupils were generally very positive about their mentor. They described various positive qualities, such as being nice, patient, non-judgemental, and reliable – as shown in the following quotes. It was clear that having shared interests helped pupils to connect with their mentor and one young person also felt that because their mentor was relatively young, they could better relate to the issues they were facing.

> “He doesn’t really rush you to talk. [He] lets you say what you need to say. He doesn’t say, ‘oh no, that's no right or something’…He is a nice guy, I really like him.” Pupil, S4, MCR

> “They are very reliable, they come to most sessions. If they are sick, they can’t come, but they are very reliable. They are very nice, and you have a good time with them.” Pupil, S4, MCR

Young people generally did not have any suggestions for improvement about mentoring. However, some young people would like to be able to have mentoring meetings outside school (for example, in a fast-food restaurant) and suggested that they would feel freer to talk in that setting.

> "It’s not really [mentor's] fault that we can’t really go outside of school premises, which is not the best, because I would like to go to [name of fast-food chain] or something, but you can’t really go outside school, which kind of limits the space that you can talk.” Pupil, S4, MCR

Some young people said mentoring was much more relaxed and informal than they thought it would be. Mentors typically said they let their mentee take the lead on what they want to discuss in the session. While there was a general appreciation of the importance of the process moving at a comfortable pace for the young person, some mentors found it challenging to know when to “push conversation” when young people are quiet. One mentor suggested that it would help to know more about the young person’s interests before meeting so they “don’t have to drag that information out of them.” However, others recognised the importance of the young person sharing what they are comfortable with. It was noted that “icebreaker” games were helpful in getting conversation going and that there could be more signposting of resources. For example, a mentor had used the Mentor Hub for

ideas of activities for their meetings but felt this had been “glossed over in the training”.

Mentors also highlighted other areas where they would appreciate more support. One mentor was worried about child protection. They said that, although initial training on this had been helpful, and they could reach out to the school Co-ordinator for support, they still worried about it. This mentor would also appreciate more signposting of where to find information (e.g. on apprenticeships) and advice on how much time they should spend on researching things for their mentee outside mentoring meetings.

Mentors appreciated opportunities to connect with other mentors through organised events and informal meetings. However, not all mentors were aware of peer resources available or had been able to attend events. A mentor mentioned that they have informal conversations at school with other mentors while waiting for their mentee to arrive for their meeting. These informal conversations had reassured them that other mentors experience similar challenges.

In terms of practicalities, it helps mentors to schedule mentoring meetings in advance so they can block out time in their diary and communicate to colleagues that these meetings cannot be changed. It can be challenging to find meeting rooms in some schools. Some mentors found that it helped their mentee to meet in an open area like the library because meeting in a small room was “too intense”. There was also a suggestion that meeting in an open area is important for making mentoring more visible to others in the school, so it is not seen as “something to be hidden away”. However, another mentor had found that it was better to meet in a more private setting.

One mentor also noted that they would ideally have chosen a school closer to their home because the travel can be a challenge in winter. They chose a school further away because they were concerned about bumping into their mentee outside school.

To what extent has MCR Pathways supported the capabilities of young people?

Evidence in this section draws on the views of pupils, school staff, mentors, parents, and local authority representatives. The pupils were all currently participating in group work or mentoring. When interpreting these findings, bear in mind that the relatively small sample size means that the young people interviewed may not be representative of all pupils taking part or all care experienced pupils.

Among girls, in particular, increased confidence was the dominant theme when we asked about the overall impact of MCR Pathways. More specifically, this included feeling more confident in social situations, having more confidence in their own abilities, and having more confidence in dealing with bullies.

> “I think she [mentor] has definitely been a great help in my self-confidence, which has only improved my social confidence”. Pupil, S4, MCR

> "It made me more confident about [dealing with] bullying and stuff." Pupil, S4, MCR

> "When I first met my mentee, she was quite introverted and all the conversation was coming from me. Now that's reversed, she's quite happy to tell me about what's she's done at the weekend and her social activities and her schoolwork and home life. So she takes the lead now which is really a big change." Mentor, MCR

This increase in confidence was attributed, in part, to encouragement from mentors and MCR Co-ordinators. These individuals were described as ‘patient’, ‘non-judgemental’, and ‘reliable’ which allowed them to build strong relationships with pupils. One pupil talked about having the confidence now to become a Young Carers Ambassador:

> “[The MCR Co-ordinator] basically just cheered me on through it all and basically said, ‘you should definitely do this, I think you’d be good at it’." Pupil, S2, MCR

More broadly, having another person to talk to – who is independent from the young person’s family and the school and can give another perspective – was seen as one of the key benefits of having a mentor and one of the main ways in which they made a difference. This was mentioned in relation to increasing confidence but also to several other capabilities.

> "I just chat more about how I’m feeling about stuff without having someone who’s involved in it as much as, like, my friend or my family members, or my teachers. " Pupil, S4, MCR

The mother of one pupil felt that the mentor provided the external validation her daughter needed to boost her confidence:

> “I’m expecting you to say that I’m great and whatever. You’re a mum, of course you are. Of course you’re going to say those things. So, I think she, kind of, looked for maybe that validation and that belief elsewhere. I think the mentoring, the fact that it’s not school and it’s not home. Probably the biggest thing is that it is somebody who doesn’t know her history unless she’s told them her history". Parent, MCR

Other improvements which different pupils saw as having the most impact on them, personally, were:

- Feeling less anxious

- Improved attendance at school (in one case, this was due to feeling less anxious)
- Feeling calmer
- Feeling less angry
- Knowing more about what they wanted to do after school.

However, there were pupils for whom mentoring seemed to make little difference. One pupil indicated that he liked his mentor and enjoyed the sessions, but felt he was already “fine” in relation to most of the capabilities and his perspective was that the mentoring had made no difference.

Another pupil said that her mentor was “a nice person” but that MCR Pathways had made no difference to her. She was very quiet, lacked confidence and was clearly not comfortable talking to the researcher. Her mentor admitted that it had been very difficult trying to get her to open up:

> “It's very difficult, it’s like drawing teeth. They don't know you from Adam, so they don't know what you're going to be like and so it's a slow, slow process of building up trust." Mentor, MCR

In this next section, we look at each of the ‘being’ and ‘doing’ capabilities in turn. As outlined in the introduction, we explored each capability with pupils and parents in the form of statements (see Appendix 3 for the list of statements and related capabilities). School staff, stakeholders and mentors were shown the logic model (see Appendix 1) and asked to pick out the capabilities where they felt the MCR Pathways had made the most difference and where it had made less of a difference.

Being capabilities

Increased academic confidence

There was considerable agreement that the MCR Pathways had helped young people to have more belief in their ability to do well in school and gain qualifications, but pupils often struggled to explain why that was. Some mentioned how mentors and MCR Co-ordinators had encouraged pupils to focus and not get distracted in class. Others gave specific studying advice:

> “I was chatting about how, like, burnt out I get from studying and how I lose interest really quickly, and I can’t hold focus. And she was talking about how there’s, like, this way of studying where you do 20 minutes on, and then you take a 20 minute break, and then you do 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off. And then you do half an hour on, and then you finish for the day […] It actually really helped. I did that to pass my English prelim." Pupil, S4, MCR

> “[my mentor] was like ‘over the holidays just try and focus on revising for your prelims, try and not go on social media as much', because that's a really bad habit of mine. 'Just try and focus on revising for your prelims, and I'm sure you will do great’." Pupil, S4, MCR

Increased social confidence

As noted above, confidence was one of the main areas that MCR Pathways helped improve. This was particularly mentioned by girls. In particular, feeling more comfortable speaking to other people, and feeling better about themselves, were commonly identified as areas where pupils felt the intervention had made an impact.

A teacher had observed young people being able to have ‘positive conversations’ with people around the school and navigating friendships better. He attributed this to the fact that the group sessions involve a good deal of work on confidence and communication.

Enhanced social capital

Having more people to talk to about things was also frequently identified by pupils as a positive impact of the scheme. They tended to cite their mentor, the MCR Co-ordinator and other pupils in their group sessions – but some also indicated that they had found it easier to talk to other people. One pupil mentioned a friend at college that he ‘can tell things that no-one else knows about’ and he thought this was because he had become used to opening up to his mentor. Another felt she could tell her friends more about herself:

> “…it opens up a lot of my circle to be able to talk more openly about my passions. Things I have been shy about before, but with that support [from her mentor], I have been happier to share a lot of my interests and hopes for the future." Pupil, S4, MCR

Family relationships were an area where MCR Pathways appeared to have less impact, with none of the pupils citing it as a key impact – but neither did they indicate that this was something that they particularly wanted from the scheme. In a number of cases, young people and parents already felt the relationship was good.

Improved health and wellbeing

Feeling happier was one of the impacts most commonly selected by pupils. This resulted from a combination of factors including enjoying the group sessions/mentor sessions and feeling better afterwards.

> "He is a nice person, he just makes me laugh, and I'm really happy." Pupil, S4, MCR

"There has definitely been an increase in my overall happiness, my overall enjoyment of school, knowing I have that at least once a week to come and see someone and speak about [my mental health struggles]." Pupil, S4, MCR

Improved relationships with peers was also mentioned as a reason for feeling happier (see 'Improved relationships with peers' below).

Feeling less anxious was an impact identified by a number of pupils. Talking over current worries and concerns with their mentor or MCR Co-ordinator helped with this. However, other pupils (and a couple of parents) said that feeling less anxious was something they wanted, but they were not sure how mentors could help.

"Well, I'm not too sure what my mentor could do about this. But it's just something that I hope could happen, because oftentimes I am anxious about things in life." Pupil, S4, MCR

Increased workplace knowledge and skills and higher aspirations

Pupils commonly felt that they knew more about the kinds of jobs they might like, were more confident about doing well at a job in the future, and were aiming higher in terms of what they wanted to do after school. This seemed to stem from mentors asking them about what they want to do and what their interests are – and providing encouragement to follow that path. Mentors also shared information about their own career paths and jobs they had done. Some pupils felt that they had been deliberately matched with a mentor in a job that fitted their own aspirations.

Doing capabilities

Improved relationships with peers, families and key adults

A number of pupils said that they had new friends, were getting on better with their friends, and/or were avoiding peers who caused problems. Pupils talked through friendship issues with their mentors who gave advice on how to sort out problems and encouraged them to spend time with friends who were more positive influences.

"I had quite a lot of friend problems, like, toxic friends. Friends that just talked about you behind your back and everything. […] I spoke to my mentor about it and she was, like, 'well whoever has like just been backstabbing, just don't talk to them'. So, that's what I did. I started talking to the friends I am with now. I started hanging around with them more. […] So, I stopped hanging around the people that weren't good in my life, and I started talking to them more, and now I'm with one of these every day of my life." Pupil, S4, MCR

"Before he would never speak to his friends on the phone, he would only ever text them and now he speaks to them a lot more on the phone. He's going out more with his friends rather than staying in the house." Parent, MCR

As noted above under ‘Enhanced social capital’, family relationships was an area where MCR Pathways appeared to have less impact. In a number of cases, this was because relationships were already good.

Relationships with teachers was another area where the intervention had less impact. Again, this was often because pupils felt they already got on well with teachers.

Stronger young person voice in schools

A number of pupils agreed that they felt more involved in school decisions. One pupil explained that this stemmed from her becoming more confident talking to other people – she had talked more in class and subsequently become class representative. Another felt it was due to the support she received from her mentor.

A couple of young people disagreed that the MCR Pathways had made a difference to their involvement in school decisions but said that it was something that they would like mentoring to help with.

There was a similar level of agreement among young people that they had been able to put some of the leadership skills that they had learnt as part of the scheme into practice at school. One boy talked about a form he had sent round the school to get backing for an issue he felt strongly about. Others felt that they had always shown leadership, to some extent, but mentoring had given them an extra boost.

Engagement in wider activities

Few pupils said that they were now doing more activities out of school and none identified that the scheme had made a key difference to this. Several pupils indicated that it had made no difference because they were already involved in a number of activities.

A parent was pleased that her son now went out to play football and had joined some after school clubs. She thought this was because the intervention had increased his confidence and resilience.

One of the mentors said that the young person she mentored was not necessarily doing more activities, but was exercising more choice in what she did; participating in the sports she was interested in rather than what her mother thought she should do. The mentor thought this was partly due to an increase in confidence but also just ‘growing up’.

Increased engagement in learning

In relation to staying on longer at school than they had originally planned, pupils commonly indicated that MCR had made no difference because they had always planned to stay on to sixth year.

Among those who had decided to stay on longer, one credited the MCR Co-ordinator (and, to a lesser extent, his mother):

> "I had planned to stay on till about S4, but now I've learnt that I should stay on till S6. That's my plan. […] [The Co-ordinator's] basically told me that there will be a lot more opportunities in the future if you stay on longer as well, so… My mum's even told me that, 'stay on and you can maybe go straight to uni as well, instead of going through college and then going to uni'. So, I'd like to do that." Pupil, S2, MCR

One pupil was planning to leave after fourth year and go to college. She indicated that her mentor was supportive of that decision. Her attendance at school had improved and her mentor was encouraging her to do things that would help her get the job she wanted after college.

Improved attendance

Pupils did not tend to identify improved attendance as something that MCR had helped with. However, this was largely because those interviewed felt their attendance had always been at least reasonably good.

One school staff member said they have data which shows an increase in attendance for care experienced young people taking part, which they put down to positive mentoring relationships. However, a local authority representative in their area noted that they did not have enough data yet to assess impact on attendance across all the schools taking part in the local authority area.

Increased attainment / achievement

There was a high level of agreement among pupils that MCR Pathways had made a positive impact on their attainment and achievement at school, with young people feeling that they were doing better in their schoolwork. This overlapped with increased self-belief that young people felt they now had (see 'Increased academic confidence' above).

Subject / course choice

There was also a high level of agreement that MCR Pathways had prompted young people to think more about the subjects they wanted to choose at school to help them get the kind of job they might want in the future. This was most commonly because mentors and MCR Co-ordinators had talked about it with pupils.

Key impacts on mentors and employers

Mentors interviewed had a range of backgrounds including working in the public, private and third sectors. Some had prior experience working with young people, while others did not. Mentors heard about the scheme in a variety of ways: through an email from their employer or on their staff intranet; through social media; on a TV programme; through a colleague; or from a flyer in a grocery store.

Mentors were motivated to take part because they wanted to help young people. One commented that she could have benefited from having someone to advise her that "there is more to life than school". Another mentor said that, when they were younger, they had taken part in a lot of activities that were only possible because adults had volunteered their time so she "wanted to give something back".

Mentors were supported to take part by their employer, and/or line managers working with them to make sure they had the time to dedicate to mentoring. Employers who were local authorities or organisations with a community focus were mentioned as particularly supportive.

> "[My line manager] is supportive and it is really good, and there was absolutely no issue. I found out how much time and things that it would take and then I put that to her, and we just discussed how we could manage it." Mentor, MCR

> "[Mentor meetings go] in as red, so anyone looking at my calendar, I'm not available…Even the chief exec has tried to put a meeting in, and I've said to him, 'no, sorry, it is my mentor meeting, I can't change that.' He is like, 'fine, fair enough, we will move that'. So, I think we are very lucky with how supportive our employer is." Mentor, MCR

Mentor and employer benefits

The scheme had some impact on mentor perceptions of young people. For example, one mentor said they now found it easier to understand young people in a one-to-one setting and it had changed how they interact with their own son. Another said it has helped them understand young people's concerns, including their concerns about the future.

Mentors also felt the scheme had had a positive impact on their work and one mentor said they had encouraged their colleagues to sign up. One mentor felt that the MCR training had increased their 'emotional intelligence', so they are better able to pick up on situations at work and do something about them. Another had become interested in mentoring and coaching junior colleagues.

> "It has definitely made me more interested in the mentoring side of things. I have been doing coaching training at work as well, which I don't think I would have done if I had not had this experience. It is nice to be able to see the impact you're having on someone." Mentor, MCR

Mentors also described how mentoring had a positive impact on their own wellbeing. They described the experience as “fulfilling”, “energising” and “rewarding”. One mentor said:

> “I think it has had a huge impact. I never don't look forward to the sessions, but I always go away delighted that I did them, I always take something. I injured myself over Christmas, and so when we met this week, I was quite sore and, actually, it took me away from that for a while. I always go away feeling much better for having been here and interacting with her.” Mentor, MCR

Mentor actions

Mentors generally indicated that they would continue mentoring at least until their mentee leaves schools or wants to stop – and commonly said that they would want to continue for longer.

Impacts summary

The infographic below provides a visual summary of the ‘doing’ and ‘being’ capabilities in relation to MCR Pathways. The statements are colour coded to illustrate those which resonated most widely or strongly (darker green) and those that resonated less widely or strongly (lighter green).

This visual summary should be read in conjunction with the section above, which provides further context and nuance to the ways in which participants felt the intervention had made a difference to them.

Increased social confidence

"I feel more confident in social situations"

Increased social confidence

"I am more comfortable speaking to other people"

Increased social confidence

"I feel better about myself"

Enhanced social capital

"My relationships with the people I live with are better"

Enhanced social capital

"I have more people I can talk to about things"

Increased academic confidence / higher aspirations

"I have more belief in my ability to do well in school/ gain qualifications"

Increased workplace knowledge and skills

"I feel more confident about doing well at a job in the future "

Increased workplace knowledge and skills

"I know more about the kinds of jobs I might like"

Higher aspirations

"I am aiming higher in terms of what I would like to do after school "

'Being' capabilities

Improved health and wellbeing

"I feel happier"

Improved health and wellbeing

"I feel less anxious "

'Doing' capabilities

Mentor actions

Sustained mentoring relationships

Increased engagement in learning

"My attendance at school has improved"

Increased engagement in learning

"I plan to stay on longer at school than I did before"

Increased attainment / achievement

"I am doing better in my schoolwork"

Stronger young person voice in schools

"At school, I have been able to put into place some of the leadership skills I have learnt "

Stronger young person voice in schools

"I feel more involved in school decisions"

Improved relationships

"I am more comfortable speaking to my mentor than I was at the start of the mentoring"

Improved relationships

"I am getting on better with my friends"

Improved relationships

"I find it easier to talk to teachers" / "I am getting on better with my teachers"

Subject/course choice

"I am thinking more about the subjects I need to choose at school to help me get the kind of job I might want in the future"

Engagement in wider activities

"I am doing more activities out of school "

Engagement in wider activities

"I am doing more things that might help me get the kind of job I want in the future"

KEY

More widely or strongly resonated — **Less widely or strongly resonated**

Broader impacts

To what extent has the MCR Pathways embedded mentoring and leadership?

MCR Pathways, at the time of writing, had been embedded in all 30 Glasgow schools (mainly from 2014/15 onwards, after the first school came on board in 2007/8) and in 89 schools across the rest of Scotland, with these schools coming on board from 2017/18 onwards. There was an overall sense among respondents that it is important for organisations like MCR to take the lead on embedding mentoring in schools, since school staff have other priorities and do not have the capacity to do this kind of work.

There was limited evidence, however, that the MCR Pathways had embedded mentoring more widely across the local authority areas we visited outside of Glasgow. One local authority stakeholder reported that they wanted to see more data on the impact before deciding whether to roll it out to other schools in their area.

There was also limited evidence of MCR Pathways leading to schools broadening their links with other services or organisations that can support young people. Schools were already working with other organisations to improve these type of opportunities, such as Career Ready, Barnardo's, and local Rotary Clubs. MCR Pathways is, therefore, seen as "one of a suite of interventions". One school staff member said that mentors' connections had led to more local work experience and volunteering opportunities for young people in that school. However, at a local authority level, it was hoped that MCR Pathways would do more to increase these kinds of opportunities.

To what extent has the MCR Pathways developed a positive relationship with DYW, SDS and the Promise?

Representatives of other organisations working with young people: DYW, SDS[19] and the Promise, generally felt that their organisation had a positive working relationship with MCR, and vice versa.

Representatives of these organisations shared various examples of partnership working. For example, at a senior level, MCR and the Promise met to discuss the definition of "care experienced", with MCR also offering support in raising local awareness of the Promise. At a school level, mentors are encouraged to complement the work of SDS by supporting their mentee with things like college applications. MCR and DYW work together on employer engagement opportunities called 'Talent Tasters'. There were also examples of individual staff moving employment between these organisations which helped share knowledge. SDS also highlighted that some of their staff are mentors.

[19] MCR have a partnership agreement with DYW and have recently signed a strategic partnership agreement with SDS.

Representatives noted that these organisations have a shared remit in supporting young people to move into positive destinations. One stakeholder said that MCR Pathways complements their work in being able to offer weekly one-to-one support, which their organisation cannot provide. However, there was a wider sense among participants that more could be done to avoid duplication of effort in this space. For example, some stakeholders compared MCR Pathways with a programme offered by Career Ready and felt these interventions were available to similar[20] cohorts of young people and had similar aims.

[20] Career Ready targets young people from economically impoverished and social mobility challenged backgrounds.

Chapter 3: Columba 1400

This chapter focuses on the Columba1400 Young Peoples' Leadership Academy and explores the perceived reach, implementation, and impact of the intervention. It draws on the perspectives of pupils from two secondary schools who have taken part, some of their parents/carers, the school staff involved, Columba 1400 staff, local authority representatives and national stakeholders.

Summary

- Columba 1400 YPLA was widely considered to be reaching the young people who would benefit from it most and engaging them at the right stage of secondary school. However, it was also felt that care experienced young people could be targeted more directly to encourage them to take part.

- It was generally agreed that the intervention is being implemented as intended. The relationship between Columba 1400 and schools, the professionalism and skills of Columba1400 staff, and the design and flexibility of the scheme were all aspects that were felt to be working particularly well.

- The selection process was highlighted as a challenging aspect of the scheme due to the limited number of places and target criteria (set by the Scottish Government) of 10 young people who are care-experienced or in tough realities. This underscored the importance of schools being responsible for the selection of young people as they know their individual circumstances.

- Some practical suggestions for improvement included giving more information to school staff and parents to explain what the YPLA would involve and having a greater number of sessions in phase one (which comprises group work in preparation for the residential). Although the five day residential in Skye was generally considered to be the right length, there was a view that spending slightly more time at the residential would be beneficial.

- Participants were very positive about the Columba 1400 YPLA overall, describing the impact it had as 'powerful', 'affirming', 'life-changing' and 'transformational'.

- The capability that most strongly resonated with young people was increased social confidence. This was a broadly and strongly felt impact of the intervention. Increased confidence also underpinned many of the other capabilities that pupils felt the YPLA had improved (such as belief in their abilities, increased social capital, and feeling more involved in school decisions).

- Broader impacts of the YPLA included the embedding of a mentoring and leadership culture in the schools (for example, through encouraging wider

discussions about values) and benefits for staff who took part (for example, developing their leadership skills).

- The potential of the Columba 1400 YPLA to help build out and deepen support for young people was recognised. However, several barriers to this happening were identified (including a lack of funding and a lack of strategic coordination).

Overview of Columba 1400 Young People's Leadership Academy

Columba 1400's Young People's Leadership Academies provide values-based leadership experiences for young people. It is delivered in three phases over the course of S2/3 (see Chapter 1 for an overview of each phase). Some schools have ongoing engagement with Columba 1400 and have taken part multiple times with different year groups.

Implementation

Understanding of intervention aims

Evaluation participants broadly understood the Columba 1400 intervention to be about supporting young people to develop self-awareness, confidence and self-efficacy by developing values-based leadership skills.

> "It's about building confidence in young people. Young people that might have barriers; that they're not attending or school isn't for them or, kind of, friendship issues. So that they're able to go out and succeed once they leave us." Local authority representative

It was also perceived, by teachers and Columba 1400 staff in particular, to be about embedding a leadership and mentoring culture in the wider school, with the Columba 1400 young people cohort playing a key role in bringing this about.

> "This is a journey for them, to help them understand what's important to them, and for them to grow in confidence and self-awareness, and unleash those amazing skills and leadership that's in them, to lead themselves, to lead others, but to also lead impact, at whatever level that means for them." Columba 1400 staff

The Columba 1400 YPLA was also seen to play a role in the broader aims of the SMLP to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap. This was through levelling out the opportunities for young people, both at school and beyond. The YPLA was commonly described as a form of "scaffolding" around the young person.

Initial engagement with schools

Initial engagement with schools comes about in a range of ways, such as:

- Schools initiating contact with Columba 1400 (e.g. because they heard about the it through word of mouth, saw it advertised, or because members of staff took part in the Columba1400 Head Teachers' Leadership Academy (HTLA).

- Existing engagement in related local initiatives (such as MCR Pathways or the Clackmannanshire Family Wellbeing Partnership).

- Columba 1400 reaching out to local authorities proactively.

Motivation to take part was particularly strong among headteachers/deputy headteachers who had direct experience of Columba 1400 through the HTLA.

> "Professionally, for me, it is the best thing I have ever done, and I would say it is the best thing I have ever done for kids in 34 years' teaching". Teacher, Columba 1400 school

Existing involvement with MCR Pathways was also identified as an encouraging factor for one school, as this positive experience provided reassurance around working with an external organisation.

A challenge identified during the initial engagement was in relation to procurement rules. One local authority representative explained that a tendering process had to be initiated due to the number of schools in the area participating and the total cost being above their threshold for non-competitive direct awards. Requirements of the tender process meant that the local authority would have to gather bids, for what was considered to be a bespoke intervention, despite having already had the taster sessions with Columba 1400. The local authority representative described this as time consuming and disruptive to the delivery of the scheme. A Columba 1400 member of staff said that this local authority is now procuring a framework for potential suppliers which will last for four years. A handful of other local authorities have done the same and they predict that others will follow suit.

Looking ahead, evaluation participants also highlighted funding as a potential barrier to future engagement of schools in the YPLA. It was noted that most schools use the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to cover costs, with some schools receiving more than others[21]. Where funding has been an issue, Columba 1400 staff said they would share information with the schools about other sources of funding. Nevertheless, for any schools unable to cover the costs with PEF monies, it was recognised that this might be a barrier to participation.

[21] The amount allocated to each school is based on the number of free school meal registrations.

Are participants being reached as intended?

The Columba 1400 YPLA was widely considered, particularly by Columba 1400 staff and school staff, to be reaching the young people who would benefit from it most.

Initial engagement with young people

The YPLA was open to the whole year group. Pupils were made aware of it through an assembly where a representative from Columba 1400 told them about the YPLA (either in person or via video call).[22] Additionally, pupils were made aware of it through notices in class or during registration. For those registering an interest, a taster session was run by Columba 1400 staff to give pupils a deeper understanding of what the YPLA involves. Pupils were then invited to submit a written application, and teachers would then select the final 16 who would take part. This process is discussed in more detail below.

Columba 1400 staff felt this initial engagement phase, prior to pupils submitting an application and being selected, was a key factor in ensuring there is meaningful engagement with young people at the right time.

Schools reported that levels of interest among young people tended to be high initially, although numbers typically dropped between the taster session and application stages. The young people who took part said that their main motivations were to improve their self-confidence, to make friends, or to try something different by going on a trip. The prospect of being away from home was an initial worry for some but did not appear to pose a significant barrier among those interviewed who went to Skye.

> "I had really bad social anxiety and couldn't talk to people. I wanted to be more comfortable talking around people and talking to people. I used to struggle a lot. [Columba 1400] helped a lot. The second I heard about it, and some of the experiences, I was instantly intrigued and went to speak to [the teacher] about it". Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Young people who took part did not report having many concerns or hesitations about signing up, other than some practical questions (such as whether dietary requirements would be catered for, or among those who suffered from travel sickness, what the journey would be like) which were addressed during phase one. It should be noted that the research did not include any young people who were either not selected or decided not to participate in the YPLA, so these could have been barriers for them.

Potential barriers to engagement were highlighted by staff. Teachers noted that not knowing specifically what the YPLA involved may have been off-putting for some young people. They understood why Columba 1400 didn't give too much away and felt that young people enjoyed the element of surprise (for example, the search and

[22] Video calls were introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic but Columba 1400 are aiming to return to face-to-face delivery for all schools.

rescue task). However, they suggested that more information for teachers in the initial engagement stages might enable them to help young people overcome any hesitations about taking part (particularly among school staff who were less familiar with the intervention having not participated in the HTLA or previously accompanied pupils on the residential).

> "Out of the whole cohort, we were expecting to be overwhelmed [by applications], but there wasn't as many as we thought, which could be because it was hard to sell. That was the biggest challenge for me. Once we had the group it was quite straightforward." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

It was also recognised that the residential element was a barrier for those in challenging circumstances for whom going away would be impractical or inappropriate. Columba 1400 staff noted that the place-based academy (a new approach which involves activities within the local community and does not include a residential element) has been developed to engage with these young people.[23]

The application process for pupils

Tailoring the approach to applications for individual schools and young people was also identified as a key factor in reaching those pupils who would benefit most. While the application process is designed to be accessible, Columba 1400 staff recognised that it may not suit all young people. Pupils are therefore encouraged to speak to Columba 1400 staff and teachers, so that they can be supported through this stage. One teacher recalled supporting a young person with their application, knowing that they were an individual who would benefit, but for whom the written aspect of the application was a barrier.

> "If [the application form] really is a barrier, I make sure that they know they can come and speak to me at the end of that session and say, 'I really don't feel comfortable doing this, but I really want to do it'. To which I'll say, 'right, you need to go and speak to [the school staff]'. And that's happened before, and that young person's gone on the programme and [been] amazing. But sometimes that barrier of writing is just too much for them." Columba 1400 staff

Selection

Following the application process, school staff select 16 young people to take part. The selection is guided by SMLP target criteria, set by the Scottish Government, which stipulate that 10 of the 16 young people should be care experienced or in 'tough realities' (such as those on the cusp of care, young carers, and those living in SIMD 1 or 2 areas).

Data provided by Columba1400 showed that:

- In year one of SMLP funding, of 160 young people taking part across 10 schools, 100 were care experienced or in tough realities (63%).

[23] This approach was not included in the current evaluation because it was at too early a stage.

- In year two, of 346 young people taking part across 21 schools, 208 were care experienced or in tough realities (60%).

However, the composition of the group was said by respondents to be a further consideration in selection. Columba 1400 staff said they advise schools that selecting a "spectrum" or "screenshot" of the year group was also important in creating a productive group dynamic, maintaining a high quality of engagement, and ensuring the value of the experience to the young people.

Indeed, although it was broadly understood that each cohort should include 10 young people who are care experienced or in tough realities, the selection process was described as being "more fluid" compared to MCR Pathways which has more of a focus on young people in tough realities (including, but not limited to, care experienced young people).

School staff described their approach to selection as involving identifying pupils who:

- Were at risk of under-achieving
- "Don't see their own potential"
- Were at risk of disengaging with school, or
- Are disadvantaged and/or who the school felt would benefit from respite from home (e.g. young carers).

Schools reported working with Pupil Support teams to identify priority young people among those who had applied, and one school staff member summarised this approach as considering "individual stories".

The selection process was identified as one of the most challenging aspects of the YPLA for schools, particularly in relation to choosing 16 from the overall number of applicants and in understanding or meeting the target criteria. Care experienced young people were considered to be the hardest group to reach, due to both their individual circumstances (e.g. if disengaged from school or experiencing difficulties at home) and their relatively low numbers in the year group. School staff said they relied on guidance from Columba 1400 staff, as well as conversations with Pupil Support teams and families, to help with this.

> "We weren't sure how to interpret that at first, but [Columba 1400] said that anyone who struggles with friends or socially would count, so that helped us get the numbers up. I don't think we would have been able to fill the spaces based just on care experience as we don't have those numbers in the cohort." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

Challenges relating to the target criteria were also recognised by Columba 1400 staff and, for them, this underscored the importance of schools knowing the circumstances of individual pupils when making their selections.

> “You need to get it right for the young people. You know, it’s not picking your most vulnerable, vulnerable young people who can barely function. That’s unfair. You're setting a young person up to fail at that point.” Columba 1400 staff

> “Young people have to be at the right stage to do it. You wouldn’t drop somebody into a lecture theatre who has got a reading age of four and chuck loads of paper at them, so it’s [about] where they are with their social-emotional literacy levels, to be able to work as part of the team […] It’s about, ‘How are you creating the conditions to really reach the young people and support them through their needs?’.” Columba 1400 staff

Improving reach

Among evaluation participants, there was a broad view that the more open approach to recruitment - inviting the whole year group to apply while providing supplementary support for those who need it - is the correct one. There was widespread trust in school staff to identify the right young people for the YPLA.

> “I would want it done in a way where someone isn’t being selected or extracted for a programme […] Yes, we would be targeting/supporting for care experienced young people and ensuring their needs are catered for at the residential. Where I have an unease is that we don’t want to extract people from a period of learning and say ‘this is because…’ If something is universally offered but then something more intensive support such as coaching and mentoring [is needed], that’s what we should be doing.” Local authority representative

Nevertheless, participants suggested ways in which reach could be improved in future. Reflecting on the lack of engagement from care experienced young people in the first cohort taking part, one school said they would target this group more directly to encourage uptake next time. As noted above, school staff felt they would be more able to promote the YPLA and encourage uptake among target groups if they were more familiar with the detail of it.

It was also recognised that the young people taking part in the YPLA could be ambassadors to promote the experience among future cohorts. School staff noted that the young people who participated had been encouraging others to take part. Among young people themselves, when asked what they would say to someone thinking about taking part, the unequivocal response was that they would encourage others to apply.

> "100%, definitely go for it. They don’t know what they’re missing out on […] If I was closer with them, they’d know how I never really spoke to people before, and they’d see how well I’d improved." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Columba 1400 staff also mentioned some partnership work with Heriot Watt University which is looking at how young people could be trained as ambassadors to make a positive difference in their local communities.

Has the YPLA been implemented as intended?

Overall, the YPLA was considered to have been implemented as intended. Participants indicated a clear understanding of the intervention's aims (as outlined above), and, as one school put it, the YPLA "does what it says on the tin" in terms of implementation.

What's working well

The relationship between the school and Columba 1400 staff was one aspect of the scheme that was considered to be working well. School staff felt that Columba 1400 staff had a clear understanding of each school's needs, while Columba 1400 staff reported that relationships with schools were positively sustained through partnership facilitators working closely with the school and getting to know the staff and young people. One school reflected that having the same Columba 1400 staff in phase one and the residential also helped to build familiarity and trust in the process. The importance of this continuity was highlighted by Columba 1400 staff too.

The Columba 1400 staff were highly regarded by young people and by school staff. Young people described Columba 1400 staff as approachable and "friendly". Teachers described them as "fantastic" and "impressive" in terms of how quickly they get to know the pupils and understand their needs in the early stages. Although Columba 1400 staff mentioned that there is a lot of administrative work for schools, which can be burdensome, the school staff interviewed for this research said they felt well supported.

> "It was great, it was constant contact from the Columban staff about, "this is what you have to do next", but they provide everything for you." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

The intervention's flexibility was also seen as a positive feature. It was felt that the scheme was tailored to the needs of each school, meaning that young people were being supported in the right way. One national stakeholder described the YPLA as always "evolving" in this way. In phase one in particular, Columba 1400 emphasised how getting a clear understanding of the school was vital for ensuring good preparation for the residential, allowing them to tailor delivery depending on each school's style of working (e.g. having all the information upfront or given at relevant points in the process), and the pupils' individual circumstances (for instance, based on any additional support or medical needs, their gender, or religion).

> "[The programme] works best when we get an understanding of what the school needs." Columba 1400 staff

The timing, pace and content of the YPLA were all viewed positively by evaluation participants. From the school perspective, S2 was considered a good point at which to engage pupils, as it was less intrusive on studies while allowing a few years for their leadership skills to benefit the school. Columba 1400 staff also acknowledged this, though they suggested that there was also value in engaging older pupils in the scheme, when they are more mature and able to have deeper group discussions.

Young people who had taken part were very satisfied with the delivery of the YPLA. They indicated that aspects they particularly enjoyed were the mix of indoor and outdoor activities, opportunities for teamwork and learning about values. The search and rescue activity was frequently mentioned as a particular highlight of the residential.

> "I think it is all like really, like well thought out, and the planning of stuff was just perfect, and the times and everything like that." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Parents also noted that they were not expected to provide anything, which made the scheme feel more inclusive and accessible.

What could be improved?

As mentioned previously, teachers felt that more information about the YPLA content for schools would help them manage the expectations of young people, ensuring they know what they are signing up for and encourage uptake. Some parents also said that they would have welcomed more information about the scheme at the start. At the same time, however, they were supportive of young people hearing about it directly from Columba 1400 and deciding for themselves whether to take part or not.

> "It would give us a clearer understanding of what they actually did, what the aims were, because as I say, I think probably most teenagers, they maybe don't verbalise it particularly well." Parent of S4 pupil, Columba 1400 graduate

In terms of the YPLA delivery, participants offered some practical suggestions for improvement. Some phase one sessions had taken place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was broadly agreed that returning to face-to-face would better maintain engagement (and this is what C1400 are doing). One young person also suggested that there could be more sessions as part of phase one to explore the values more fully ahead of the residential.

Participants were very positive about the residential itself, although one suggestion for improvement included running more outdoor activities. This was raised by young people who found the reflective/writing exercises challenging, although they understood the purpose of them. The residential was generally felt to be the right length. However, some young people and staff mentioned that the residential could be extended to a full week to allow more time to fully explore both the Columba 1400 values and individuals' values.

> "Making it a bit longer because there are six core values at Columba 1400, and we had five days, and we did a value each day. We did two on the last day, I think. So, I just felt some [may have been] a bit rushed. I think if we could just stay for even like seven days it would be slightly better." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Phase three was felt to be a more challenging part of the YPLA for some schools. Staff and pupils noted that engagement in the phase three project was not maintained by all who went on the residential, and Columba 1400 staff mentioned that staffing changes within schools can also disrupt progress. The timing of the residential relative to the school year can also be a factor; one school had returned from the residential just before the summer holidays and had lost a bit of momentum on their project by the time they returned.

However, Columba 1400 staff highlighted that young people did not necessarily have to engage in phase three for the impact of the intervention to be felt, as it could be demonstrated in other parts of their lives (see impacts).

How is YPLA delivery changing and improving over time?

Reflecting on how the intervention has changed over time, Columba 1400 staff mentioned that they have made the following improvements:

- Putting more time into phase one to help better prepare young people for the residential.

- Involving school staff more in phase one and having separate sessions with them. This was introduced to give teachers the opportunity to ask questions that they would not want to ask in front of pupils and to increase teacher engagement with the scheme.

- Introducing phase three while on the residential in Skye, rather than afterwards. This was perceived by Columba 1400 staff to have helped schools who were not sure how to approach the phase three project. It enabled them to make a start with Columba 1400 staff there to provide initial guidance in-person.

- While not covered as part of this research, the place-based academy was considered to be a further enhancement, as it allows the intervention to engage more young people for whom the residential element is a barrier.

- Forming different partnerships to deepen the support provided to young people (see the building out and deepening section of this report below for more details).

- Introducing a leadership passport. This is a document summarising a young person's values and achievements to support conversations with careers advisers or other key adults.

To what extent has the YPLA supported the capabilities of young people?

Participants were very positive about the Columba 1400 YPLA overall, describing the impact it had as “powerful”, “affirming”, “life-changing” and “transformational”.

> “Pupils come out of it knowing what they could do. Some who would never want to lead a group now want to, have made an effort in the project and have more of a voice now. It's built them up as individuals and fed into school leadership and community too.” Teacher, Columba 1400 school

In particular, increased social confidence and communication skills were common themes when discussing the overall impacts of the intervention. Pupils described feeling more confident in social situations as a result of taking part. They attributed this increased confidence to the amount of group work that they experienced, both in the sessions leading up to the residential and during the residential itself, which encouraged them to speak to their peers and helped them feel more comfortable in group settings. Staff also mentioned that some pupils had been chosen to take part because they were struggling with confidence – and they had observed significant changes in those pupils.

> “I learned to be myself around a bigger group of people, rather than a small one, and it made me feel more confident talking to people. And the tasks helped that as well, because they put us into groups, so, I might have been in a group with people I didn’t really know that well but then, because of that, I got to know them and ended up talking to them. I think I’ve became a lot more comfortable around people.” Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Pupils also highlighted how the Columba 1400 YPLA had improved their self-esteem and sense of belief in their abilities. They described having more confidence in themselves to contribute at school and to socialise or to try new things outside of school. Parents/carers and staff also observed more of a self-assuredness in the young people who, before taking part in Columba 1400, had lacked this:

> “One of the boys had really low self-esteem before going. The difference in him, you see the confidence in him in classes, in the corridors he is chatting to people, he is not shying away now. He is out there; you see him and you know that he is there. So, for him, I think that is the biggie. He has come out of the corner and he is taking part in things.” Teacher, Columba 1400 school

In the next section, we look at each of the ‘being’ and ‘doing’ capabilities in turn. As outlined in the introduction, we explored each capability with pupils and parents in the form of statements (see Appendix 3 for the list of statements and related capabilities). Pupils who took part in these interviews were either in S4, having taken part in the residential the previous year and almost completed their phase three project, or in S3, having returned from the residential more recently and being part way through their phase three project. School staff, stakeholders and mentors were shown the logic model (see Appendix 1) and asked to pick out the capabilities

where they felt the intervention had made the most difference and where it had made less of a difference.

Being capabilities

Increased social confidence

Young people who identified increased social confidence as an area where the YPLA had made a positive difference, described how they felt anxious in social situations, or avoided them altogether, prior to taking part. Working in groups encouraged them to get to know their peers and adults (teachers and Columba 1400 staff) which, in turn, made it easier for them to be in social situations beyond the YPLA. Since returning from Skye, pupils said they were finding group work at school easier and were also feeling more comfortable with different types of interactions outside of school (for instance, socialising with friends or ordering in a restaurant). Girls, in particular, mentioned this as an area that the YPLA had made a key difference to. As this pupil and her parent put it:

> "I'm more confident around my peers and much more self-assured around them. I used to be quite shy and nervous, but now I'm comfortable talking to people in different environments." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

> "She was at her first house party on Halloween, which is something I just don't think she would have really imagined herself doing before." Parent of S4 pupil, Columba 1400 graduate

Related to this, pupils said they felt more comfortable speaking with other people as a result of taking part in Columba 1400 and had more confidence in their ability to do this. Boys in particular highlighted this as a key difference, and it was again attributed to the format of the YPLA which included a lot of groupwork activities to encourage young people to share their views. There was also a sense among those who identified with this impact that the YPLA had helped reduce barriers to speaking, such as fears around saying the wrong thing, making mistakes, or being judged by others. Several pupils commented that they would not have felt comfortable taking part in an interview for this research before the YPLA.

> "It has given me a lot more confidence […] in group scenarios. Whereas usually, if I was in a group myself, I'm quite a shy person, I would maybe just let someone else take control, but now I feel like I would be […] more involved in the discussions." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Columba 1400 staff attributed this impact to the facilitation of the YPLA and the environment within which it is delivered, which they felt empowered young people to try new things.

> "It's creating the environment in a massively deliberate way to help effect change, to help them feel safe enough, and then provide the right experiences that they can start taking those risks and trying things out that they wouldn't try before." Columba 1400 staff

Where increased social confidence was not something that pupils or parents/carers felt the YPLA had made a difference to, this was generally because it was not considered to be an issue for that young person to begin with.

Enhanced social capital

Enhanced social capital was evident among pupils who felt that their friendship network had widened as a result of taking part in Columba 1400. This was partly because they had made new friends as part of the YPLA, but also because they had built up confidence in their ability to make new friends in the future. Some pupils did not feel that taking part had resulted in them having more people to talk to but felt that the YPLA had given them confidence to talk to other people, such as peers or teachers, and not to bottle things up as much.

> "I made a few friends there and I realise that people that you don't know as well are nicer to you, in my case anyway. So, anyone that I'm not really close with, we can actually talk a lot easier." Pupil, S3, Columba 1400 graduate

A member of staff from Columba 1400 highlighted an instance where the intervention had enabled a pupil to positively influence existing friends. They described a situation in one school where, prior to taking part, a pupil's behaviour in the local community was causing problems. Since returning from the residential, the pupil had not only stopped offending themselves, but had influenced their friends to make better choices too. The headteacher also cited this example.

Albeit to a lesser extent, there was also evidence among those interviewed that relationships at home had improved for some pupils as a result of the intervention (though, when asked to pick out what the 'key differences' were for them, this was not something they highlighted). In one case, both a pupil and their parent/carer felt that their relationships at home had improved. From the young person's perspective, he felt he was spending more time with his parents, while the parent felt he had been more engaged with family time. In another case, while a pupil did not identify this as an area where the YPLA had had an impact (viewing their relationships at home as already good), their parent/carer did feel that they were opening up more:

> "Certainly, in the family dynamic, we sit and we talk more than we did. Columba1400 has been the catalyst for this." Parent of S3 pupil, Columba 1400 graduate.

More broadly, some pupils felt that their time away on the residential helped them appreciate their parents and relate to them more, which had encouraged them to help out at home. Columba 1400 staff provided further anecdotal evidence of this, describing how the YPLA had helped some pupils to realise the importance of their family relationships. This was linked to young peoples' experiences of getting to know their teachers better during the residential (e.g. using their first names) and viewing them more 'as people'.

> “Because we were with the teachers and seeing that they are just people like us […] It just made me realise that [adults] were just like us, so I started helping out more in the house and stuff.” Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Others noted that their relationships with siblings had improved as they could communicate better than before and this was linked to having more confidence to speak and share their opinions.

A greater self-awareness among young people was also reported. The process of identifying values and hearing about others’ values was considered to have helped them to develop better listening skills and to be more respectful and empathetic towards others.

> "I'm a better person - kinder, more sensitive, nicer." Pupil, S3, Columba 1400 graduate

Improved health and wellbeing

Improved health and wellbeing was identified as an impact by staff and pupils alike. Some pupils noted that the experience of going away to Skye and being in nature had been beneficial to their mental health, and others described feeling generally happier. This was linked to positive memories of the trip, the ongoing support from peers and teachers, and feeling engaged and “upbeat” about the phase three project (which pupils were still involved in at the time of research).

Some pupils reported feeling less anxious because of taking part. They felt the opportunities to speak in public had made them less self-conscious and more able to manage their anxiety (particularly in social situations but also in terms of managing stressful events like exams). Staff also highlighted that the time away helped the young people to focus on relaxation, being calm and developing strategies to help manage problems.

> “I used to feel anxious about everything, even coming to school sometimes, but now I know I can speak to teachers any time. I still have some anxiety but it’s nowhere near as bad. Columba 1400 helped because of talking to people one on one and speaking publicly. We were pushed out our comfort zone.” Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Other pupils still felt quite anxious and did not see the YPLA making a difference in this way. However, they were not sure if that was something that it could have helped with anyway, as they saw it as a more “personal” thing. These pupils did not mention any expectations that the YPLA could have helped them with their anxiety (citing other motivations for taking part such as to make friends or try something new). In contrast, those who felt the intervention had helped them to feel less anxious tended to highlight this – particularly in relation to social situations – as a reason for applying.

There was also evidence of the experience helping young people develop strategies for managing their mental wellbeing. One pupil described feeling better in

the mornings while in Skye as they were going to bed earlier and were not allowed their phones, and so had adopted these habits since returning home.

Increased academic confidence

Although identified as a key difference among teachers and Columba 1400 staff more so than among pupils, increased academic confidence was identified by several evaluation participants as something the YPLA had made a difference to. From the staff perspective, it was felt that the intervention had given pupils a more positive mindset towards their studies.

> "Negativity is not there, because usually you get to fourth grade, I'm going to fail this, I'm going to fail this. But they have all got the kind of 'can do' [attitude]." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

Columba 1400 staff echoed this, viewing the YPLA's impact in this area as providing tools for young people to persevere, to work through challenges using their values, and to build resilience.

From the pupil perspective, while academic confidence was part of it, the impact was broader as they felt the YPLA had given them more belief in themselves and in their abilities generally. This was linked to the values-based approach which encouraged pupils to identify values that matter most to them.

> "Doing values about yourself, finding out who you are, talking about things like that just helped me know myself better and have more belief in my abilities. Not just qualifications, but I just think I have more belief in my ability and belief in myself." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

Increased workplace knowledge and skills & higher aspirations

The impact of the YPLA on young peoples' knowledge of the workplace was not as widespread as for other capabilities, as pupils typically reported either that they already had an idea about the kinds of jobs they might like to do before the YPLA or that it was not something they had come to think about yet. However, there was a clear sense that the intervention had helped pupils feel more confident about doing well at a job in the future and had contributed to a greater sense of self-belief (particularly among girls). This was again linked to their experiences working together as a team and speaking in group settings as part of the YPLA.

> "It is always about confidence really. I kind of thought, if I'm going to be a teacher, I'm going to have to have that belief in myself, and I really got to see that through Columba 1400." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

On employability more generally, Columba 1400 staff highlighted how the YPLA helped young people develop the "soft skills" and emotional intelligence needed for the workplace, as well as the qualifications. Developing the impact of the YPLA in terms of employability was discussed as a growth area for the scheme (see the building out and deepening section of this report below).

Similarly, in terms of higher aspirations, this did not resonate as strongly with pupils as other capabilities did, as they did not tend to feel that the YPLA had helped them "aim higher" in terms of what they would like to do after school. But there was a sense that participation had helped them believe in themselves to do well in the future whatever they were aiming for (while for some it was just not something that they had thought much about yet). From the perspective of Columba 1400 staff, the YPLA had helped young people take responsibility for, and ownership of, their futures.

> "[It's about] young people making the right choice to be the best version of themselves that they can be. So, what's your pathway, no wrong pathway, what do you need to do it, and how do you take responsibility to get you where you want to be, because you've got the skills and the amazingness inside to do that." Columba 1400 staff

From school and Columba 1400 staff, there was also evidence that the YPLA has helped to support young people with their personal development. School staff reported high levels of engagement in the phase three project among pupils, and although this was not universal, staff felt the intervention had supported and engaged young people in different ways, such as providing them with tools to be more resilient, to "work through complexities" and to make better decisions in terms of social networks.

> "You can see that they are thinking, how do I use what I have learnt at Columba 1400 to get me through school and beyond." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

Parents/carers echoed this, with one perceiving their child to have a more "aspirational" outlook after taking part in Columba 1400, particularly in terms of career options. Another parent felt their child was demonstrating more personal organisation skills and commitment to the phase three project than they had observed before in other settings.

Doing capabilities

Stronger young person voice in schools

There was widespread agreement among pupils, parents/carers, school staff and local authorities that the Columba 1400 YPLA had led to stronger young person voice in the schools. Phase three was the main driver of this. However, the extent to which this went beyond the intervention differed depending on how far through the YPLA the school was. For one school, where pupils had returned from Skye a few months before interviewing took place, the sense of increased involvement in school decisions among young people was more limited to their involvement in the phase three project only. For another school, where pupils had returned from Skye the previous year and were coming to the end of their phase three project, there was more evidence of young people getting involved in wider initiatives too (e.g. being class representatives or sitting on student councils) or feeling more confident to take leadership roles in the classroom:

> "I feel like I've helped and contributed. I feel more confident doing speaking assignments than I would have before." Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

There was also a broad sense among all participants that the YPLA had enabled young people to put their leadership skills into practice. In relation to the phase three project, participants highlighted their commitment to this, and there was a clear sense of duty and ownership over it. There was also a sense of empowerment, as young people felt they had more of a say and were being allowed to make decisions as a group to drive the project forward (rather than being told what to do by an adult).

> "The impact I would say is that the young people feel more empowered and that they've got a voice and any ideas that they do have about their community are going to be listened to and, actually, they come to fruition." Columba 1400 staff

There was broad recognition among evaluation participants that the Columba 1400 YPLA had played its part in engaging with and supporting young people to develop these leadership skills. But it was also recognised that there was a responsibility on the school to continue to nurture this engagement with values-based leadership beyond the YPLA, both among young people and staff.

> "Columba 1400 has that ability to build. I'm still using the values-based leadership that I learned. Thinking longer-term is more for practitioners than Columba1400. You have to have headteachers trained, as well as young people, so you're talking the same language." Local authority representative

Improved relationships with peers, families and key adults

As well as improved relationships at home (see above), pupils and parents also identified improved relationships with peers as something that Columba1400 had made a difference to. Pupils who identified with this felt that they were getting on better with their friends because they were able to talk to them more. Pupils also reported that their social networks had expanded through making new friends or that they had prioritised different friendship groups that made them feel happier.

> "I think the new friends that I have now are a lot better to me, so I am better as a result of that." Pupil, S3, Columba 1400 graduate

There was evidence that the collaborative nature of the Columba 1400 YPLA, which encourages young people to engage with their teachers on more of a peer-to-peer basis, had a positive impact on pupils' relationships with their teachers too. For some, this meant being able to relate to teachers more and see them as human beings while, for others, it meant finding teachers more approachable and easier to talk to than they had before. This was especially the case for the teachers they went to Skye with, but in some cases, pupils felt that they would feel comfortable opening up to other teachers that they trusted. School staff also echoed this view.

> "The relationship we built with them up there, because you are cut off from everyone, and you have to get on, you need to make the effort, and they were

> just a fantastic group of kids. It is still going on since we came back." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

In other cases, pupils did not feel the YPLA had made a difference to their relationship with teachers or their ability to talk to them, which was generally because they felt they got on well with teachers already.

Engagement in wider activities

While some pupils reported that they were already quite active outside of school, others said that they had either signed up for more things, were socialising more outside of school, or felt more confident in the activities they were already engaged in as a result of the Columba 1400 YPLA. This was more evident among S4 pupils than S3 pupils, which could reflect the fact that S4 pupils had had more time to engage in wider activities since returning from the residential the previous year (compared to S3 pupils who had returned more recently). This was also mentioned more often by girls than boys.

> “I started in a brass band which, I think, I was asked before, but I [had] said, no, because I didn't think I would be able to do it. It is, again, just about the confidence and stuff like that, it really helped.” Pupil, S4, Columba 1400 graduate

There was also some evidence of increased participation in employability activities, particularly among S4s, which pupils associated with having more confidence to ask questions about jobs, to take on more responsibilities as part of the activities they’re doing and to start getting prepared (e.g. by creating a CV). However, this impact was not widespread, with several participants saying that they were already doing this (perhaps because of their age and stage at school) or had not thought about it yet.

Increased engagement in learning

Increased engagement in learning did not resonate strongly with pupils as they typically reported that they had planned to stay on at school regardless and that their attendance record was already good. However, one pupil said that they had been considering leaving after S5 but had decided to stay on to further develop their leadership skills while another, who had not been sure, said that the YPLA made them realise the benefits of staying on.

> “I was thinking of leaving at S5, not sure but think I might stay on longer. The whole point was about making us leaders so, if I left at S5, I wouldn’t have much to show. If I stay on, I can show to younger people.” Pupil, S3, Columba 1400 graduate

Staying on rates were highlighted as a key impact of the intervention by teachers and Columba 1400 staff. From the staff perspective, there were a number of pupils who might not have stayed on at school had they not taken part in the Columba 1400 YPLA. Staff also said that general engagement in learning had improved for pupils who were at risk of disengaging. It is possible that the difference between

pupil and staff perspectives on staying on rates reflects the sample of pupils we interviewed.

> "[One pupil] was potentially being removed from class because of bad behaviour and at risk of making bad decisions. They seem a lot more engaged now, which is really good. There could have been other factors but Columba 1400 was a big one. They have a more positive association with school now." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

Reflecting on staying on rates, Columba 1400 staff suggested that this might not be the right path for all young people and that choosing an apprenticeship or college route instead would also be positive outcomes.

While improved attendance was also not widely identified as something that the Columba 1400 YPLA had made a difference to - as most participants reported good levels of attendance regardless - one pupil reported that reduced anxiety had enabled them to come to school more. Among some staff, this was noted as a key impact, but it was also noted that pupils had been chosen based on likelihood to engage, and so the cohort would have included those with better attendance generally.

Increased attainment / achievement

While increased attainment and achievement did not resonate strongly with pupils, some staff felt this was a key impact of the intervention. They acknowledged that it was difficult to quantify, but sensed that the YPLA had helped care experienced pupils and those in tough realities engage with school more. Some pupils were not clear on the link between Columba 1400 and attainment, but others felt that their experiences had helped them be more focused and determined in their school-work.

> "One of my values was definitely determination, so that concentration, that drive is kind of applicable to my school-work." Pupil, S3, Columba 1400 graduate

Subject / course choice

Views on the extent to which the YPLA made a difference to subject choice were mixed. Perhaps because they were focusing on the most recent choices they had made (in S2), this was not generally considered to be a relevant impact. A timing element was highlighted by one pupil who felt that, had the residential taken place before subjects were chosen, it might have influenced their decisions.

However, one pupil felt that the YPLA had given them confidence to speak to their school careers advisor about subject choices, which they would not have felt comfortable doing before C1400. There was also a sense of accountability and responsibility over subject choice and decisions for the future – which was attributed to the YPLA.

> "[Pupil] had picked chemistry but isn't enjoying it as much as he'd hoped, so now he's thinking about conversations he can have to change subject but still get the subjects he needs for future jobs. He doesn't defer to us as much now. He has

> his own ideas and opinions which he's happy to voice as a result of the work they did with Columba 1400." Parent of S3 pupil, Columba 1400 graduate

Columba 1400 staff highlighted this as an impact of the YPLA too, in that young people were being empowered through the intervention to make the right decisions for themselves, rather than being told what to do.

> "Give them the scaffolds to help them use their own voice to decide what they want to do. It is about that 'no wrong pathway' and the conversations we have that help them and their confidence, their aspiration, their motivation, to make the right choices for them." Columba 1400 staff

Impacts summary

The infographic below provides a visual summary of the 'doing' and 'being' capabilities in relation to the Columba 1400 YPLA. The statements are colour coded to illustrate those which resonated most widely or strongly (darker blue) and those that resonated less widely or strongly (lighter blue).

This summary should be read in conjunction with the section above, which provides further context and nuance to the ways in which participants felt the YPLA had made a difference to them.

Increased social confidence

"I feel more confident in social situations"

Increased social confidence

"I am more comfortable speaking to other people"

Increased social confidence

"I feel better about myself"

Enhanced social capital

"My relationships with the people I live with are better"

Enhanced social capital

"I have more people I can talk to about things"

Increased academic confidence / higher aspirations

"I have more belief in my ability to do well in school/ gain qualifications"

Increased workplace knowledge and skills

"I feel more confident about doing well at a job in the future "

Increased workplace knowledge and skills

"I know more about the kinds of jobs I might like"

Higher aspirations

"I am aiming higher in terms of what I would like to do after school "

Improved health and wellbeing

"I feel happier"

Improved health and wellbeing

"I feel less anxious "

'Being' capabilities

'Doing' capabilities

KEY

More widely or strongly resonated — **Less widely or strongly resonated**

Increased engagement in learning

"I am doing more things that might help me get the kind of job I want in the future"

Increased engagement in learning

"My attendance at school has improved"

Increased engagement in learning

"I plan to stay on longer at school than I did before"

Increased attainment / achievement

"I am doing better in my schoolwork"

Stronger young person voice in schools

"At school, I have been able to put into place some of the leadership skills I have learnt "

Stronger young person voice in schools

"I feel more involved in school decisions"

Improved relationships

"My relationships with the people I live with are better"

Improved relationships

"I am getting on better with my friends"

Improved relationships

"I find it easier to talk to teachers" / "I am getting on better with my teachers"

Subject/course choice

"I am thinking more about the subjects I need to choose at school to help me get the kind of job I might want in the future"

Engagement in wider activities

"I am doing more things that might help me get the kind of job I want in the future"

Engagement in wider activities

"I am doing more activities out of school "

Broader impacts

To what extent has the YPLA embedded mentoring and leadership across the school system?

It was commonly mentioned by school staff that the YPLA had helped to embed mentoring and leadership practices across the school system.

One school's participation in the YPLA had helped embed more of a mentoring culture through changes to registration groups, encouraging discussions about values and shifting the approach to discipline away from "punitive" towards more "restorative" approaches.

> "The Columba 1400 cohort are helping with [registration changes, which are] encouraging more of a mentoring culture. This change is based on Columba 1400 and trying to get more leadership opportunities across the school." Teacher, Columba 1400 school

Benefits for school staff involved in the YPLA were also identified as a ripple effect of the scheme and were considered to be the result of effective partnership working between Columba 1400 and the school. Columba 1400 staff reported that they often receive feedback from teachers about the (sometimes unexpected) impact that the YPLA has had on them professionally in terms of how they view themselves as leaders.

Young people felt that they had been able to put leadership skills into practice, at least to some extent, and felt that they had more of a voice in school than they did before (see Doing capabilities). Parents also described it as "refreshing" to see the young people more involved in the school and hoped this would continue in future.

> "Moving forward, the group that have been involved, I'd like to think they feel more invested in the school and so will contribute to the school's improvement in other areas in the future […] sometimes a small group can be a catalyst for change". Parent of S3 pupil, Columba1400 graduate

Building-out and deepening

Columba 1400 staff highlighted examples of working with other organisations to offer more bespoke support within schools, particularly around employability. An example given was a partnership with Heriot Watt University which provided training to Columba 1400 staff on having helpful conversations with young people who are struggling to plan their next steps (e.g. course choice or staying on at school).

> "[The training] was about supporting our staff with knowledge around effective pathways, how to have conversations with young people effectively to support them along the lines of leading themselves effectively, building on their confidence, removing that glass ceiling, there's no wrong path, that journey." Columba 1400 staff

Columba 1400 staff also mentioned the ongoing support of, and involvement with DYW's 'World of Work' annual event and conversations with SDS about the leadership passport; a document that summarises a young person's values and achievements to support conversations between young people and careers advisers or other key adults. This has been introduced at the end of phase three of the YPLA since April 2023.

Local authorities and national stakeholders felt there was huge potential for the Columba 1400 YPLA (and SMLP more broadly) to help provide links with other services or organisations outside of schools to support young people – but had not seen clear evidence of this happening yet.

Challenges relating to funding post-pandemic and the number of different agendas across the education system were identified as barriers to this happening. One rural local authority representative suggested that having a "connector" role (with a specific remit to bring work together) would help with this building-out element, especially across complex geographical areas.

> "I'm sure it's happening in pockets but [it's] getting a national drive on it, I suppose." Local authority

Local authorities noted some evidence of organisations trying to deepen support for young people beyond the Columba 1400 YPLA, highlighting examples of young people going through the leadership programme and then going on to be advocates or leaders in other things, such as the Youth Parliament. Again, the potential for harnessing the YPLA for a "lifetime development approach" was recognised, but it was felt that a national strategic approach would be required to achieve this.

Measuring longer-term impact

This phase of the evaluation was not able to consider longer-term impacts of Columba 1400 on the young people taking part[24]. However, some evidence of the potential longevity of impacts was provided by school staff and local authority representatives, who described the ongoing impacts of having taken part in the HTLA themselves (one participant said that it continues to inform their work years later). Based on these personal reflections, coupled with the immediate impacts that had been observed from the YPLA by school staff, there was confidence among these respondents in the programme having similar long-term impacts on the young people taking part.

Columba 1400 staff also shared longer-term impact stories, highlighting sustainable partnerships with schools, and the feedback they receive about the systemic cultural shifts happening in schools as a result of taking part. Nevertheless,

[24] Research by the Training & Employment Research Unit, University of Glasgow (commissioned by Columba 1400, with reporting in 2015) suggested, on the basis of a follow-up survey with young people, that perceived impacts for young people could be longer-lasting, beyond the point of leaving school, although small sample sizes limit the robustness of this evidence. (The report is not publicly available but has been seen by the authors).

measuring the longer-term impact of the programme on young people was identified as something that Columba 1400 continues to work on.

“A lot of the impact, kind of is a bit subjective, you know, how do you absolutely nail down and measure things? And our challenge as well is, how do we measure the impact that we’ve had, given the interventions that are around a lot of these young people over their journey?” Columba 1400 staff

The research will revisit this in later stages. However, there will be limitations on robustly measuring the long-term impact of Columba 1400 YPLAs on young people within the scope and remit of this evaluation. (See Evaluation aims above).

Chapter 4: Has the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme been implemented as intended and embedded mentoring and leadership across the school system?

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 above, it was generally agreed that MCR Pathways and the Columba 1400 YPLA had both been implemented as intended in the schools where they were running.

In relation to the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme as a whole, however, it was found that the speed and scale of rollout of the programme has adapted over time and has been considerably more limited than originally intended. Stakeholders indicated that the main reason for the more limited rollout of the programme was the much less favourable fiscal climate which had developed since the start of the programme. It was suggested that the original funding model, which required matched funding from local authorities/schools, was no longer sustainable.

> "When [SMLP was] set up, the world was quite different […] budget constraints and local government constraints [have constrained the expansion]." National Stakeholder

Another stakeholder felt the original funding model (i.e. part-funding for three years after which schools/local authorities would commit funding to sustain the interventions) was no longer sustainable:

> "The context, especially the fiscal climate, has had a big impact. The ability to match funding from the local authority is a huge barrier […] the three-year model of funding, proving effectiveness and then self-funding, that's not feasible now [...] the original model for sustainability isn't viable." National Stakeholder

The fact that funding the programme was not a statutory responsibility was identified as a further factor in local authority decisions not to fund it.

The original vision of the two interventions complementing each other within individual schools has also not materialised. Cost is, again, likely to be a major factor with schools/local authorities feeling that they cannot justify funding two schemes in the same school.

However, another stakeholder questioned how much it mattered that few schools had participated in both schemes:

> "the reach as a joint offer hasn't been as wide as hoped but there's certainly been interest in the component parts. [How much does that matter?] I don't know. There are two strong offers at face value so, if people in schools and local authorities identify that offer as something that's going to meet young people's

needs, then it is still delivering, ultimately, on what we are aiming to do." National Stakeholder.

Have mentoring and leadership been embedded across the school system?

There was some evidence that the two interventions had embedded mentoring and leadership within the schools in which they were operating.

In term of the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme as a whole, given that the programme has not been rolled out at the scale and pace intended, and has reached considerably fewer schools and pupils than originally envisioned, we would conclude that, at this stage, mentoring and leadership have not yet been fully embedded across the Scottish school system as a whole.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and suggestions for improvement

At this interim stage in the evaluation (which is due to conclude in spring 2026), we can say the following in relation to the evaluation questions:

To what extent has the programme supported the capabilities of young people?

There is qualitative evidence that both interventions – MCR and Columba 1400 – have had a positive impact on the young people who have taken part in them. Increased confidence was identified as one of the main impacts of both interventions – and most of the 'being and 'doing' capabilities in the programme Theory of Change (Appendix 1) were positively impacted.

MCR Pathways impacts

Increased confidence was a dominant theme when discussing the key impacts of MCR Pathways on young people, particularly in relation to increased social confidence and more belief in their own abilities. This increase in confidence was attributed, in part, to encouragement from mentors and MCR Co-ordinators. These individuals were described as 'patient', 'non-judgemental', and 'reliable' which allowed them to build strong relationships with pupils.

Other improvements which different MCR pupils saw as having the most impact on them, personally, were:

- Feeling less anxious
- Improved attendance at school
- Feeling calmer
- Feeling less angry
- Knowing more about what they wanted to do after school.

However, there were also some pupils for whom mentoring seemed to make little difference. In some cases, pupils felt they already had the capabilities asked about and so their perspective was that mentoring made no difference. Another pupil said that her mentor was "a nice person" but that MCR Pathways had made no difference to her. She was very quiet, lacked confidence and was clearly not comfortable talking to the researcher. Her mentor admitted that it had been very difficult trying to get her to open up.

Columba 1400 Young People's Leadership Academy impacts

Participants were also very positive about the Columba 1400 YPLA overall, describing the impact it had as "powerful", "affirming", "life-changing" and "transformational".

Increased social confidence and communication skills were common themes when discussing the overall impacts of the YPLA. Pupils attributed this increased confidence to the amount of group work that they experienced, both in the sessions leading up to the residential and during the residential itself, which encouraged them to speak to their peers and helped them feel more comfortable in group settings. Staff also mentioned that some pupils had been chosen to take part because they were struggling with confidence, and they had observed significant changes in those pupils.

Pupils also highlighted how the Columba 1400 YPLA had improved their self-esteem and sense of belief in their abilities. They described having more confidence in themselves to contribute at school and to socialise or to try new things outside of school. Parents/carers and staff also observed more self-assuredness in the young people who, before taking part in Columba1400, had lacked this.

It was recognised that the residential element was a barrier for those in challenging circumstances for whom going away would be impractical or inappropriate. Columba 1400 staff noted that the place-based academy (a new approach which involves activities within the local community and does not include a residential element) has been developed to engage with these young people.[25]

Are participants being reached as intended?

School staff and wider stakeholders generally agreed that the interventions were reaching the young people who would benefit the most. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of school staff having the flexibility to decide which pupils take part, and trusting schools to make the right decisions.

However, there were some challenges to overcome in reaching a greater number of care experienced young people who have lower attendance at school.

To what extent has the programme engaged with and supported young people?

Both interventions have effectively engaged with and supported young people. In MCR, engagement is encouraged by a positive relationship between the school Co-ordinator and young people, and a thorough mentor matching process. In Columba 1400, the professionalism and skills of Columba 1400 staff were seen as key to this engagement.

[25] This approach was not included in the current evaluation because it was at too early a stage.

To what extent has the programme developed a positive relationship with Developing the Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and the Promise?

MCR was generally felt to have a positive working relationship with other initiatives supporting young people, specifically DYW, SDS, and the Promise, although there was a view that work is needed to avoid duplication of effort in this space.

Columba 1400 staff also mentioned engagement with other organisations supporting young people, including involvement with DYW's 'World of Work' annual event and conversations with SDS about developing a 'leadership passport'; a document that summarises a young person's values and achievements to support conversations between young people and careers advisers or other key adults.

How is the programme delivery changing and improving over time?

There were examples from both interventions of improvements to delivery based on MCR and Columba 1400 staff reflecting on how things could be better or based on feedback.

Has the programme been implemented as intended?

It was generally agreed that the Columba 1400 YPLA has been implemented as intended.

MCR Pathways was also generally felt to have been implemented as intended. There had been some local changes to school Co-ordinator employment terms and the delivery of group work. These changes were intended to improve delivery in terms of reducing staff costs (and therefore increasing the sustainability of the scheme), staff retention and intervention effectiveness for young people.

In relation to the SMLP programme as whole, the speed and scale of rollout has been considerably less than originally intended. Stakeholders indicated that the main reason for the more limited rollout of the programme was the much less favourable fiscal climate which had developed since the start of the programme. It was suggested that the original funding model, which required matched funding from local authorities/schools, was no longer sustainable.

The vision of the two interventions complementing each other within schools has also not materialised. Cost is, again, likely to be a major factor with schools/local authorities feeling that they cannot justify funding two schemes in the same school. One stakeholder questioned how much that mattered if running a single scheme was meeting young people's needs.

Have mentoring and leadership been embedded across the school system?

MCR Pathways, at the time of writing, had been embedded in all 30 Glasgow schools (mainly from 2014/15 onwards, after the first school came on board in 2007/8) and in 89 schools across the rest of Scotland, with these schools coming

on board from 2017/18 onwards. There was an overall sense among respondents that it is important for organisations like MCR to take the lead on embedding mentoring in schools, since school staff have other priorities and do not have the capacity to do this kind of work.

There was, however, limited evidence that MCR Pathways has embedded mentoring more widely across the local authority areas we visited outside of Glasgow. One local authority stakeholder wanted to see more data on the impact of the intervention before deciding whether to roll it out to other schools in their area.

In relation to Columba 1400, it was commonly mentioned by school staff that the YPLA had helped to embed mentoring and leadership practices across their school.

One school's participation in the Columba 1400 YPLA had helped embed more of a mentoring culture through changes to registration groups, encouraging discussions about values and shifting the approach to discipline away from "punitive" towards more "restorative" approaches.

Columba 1400 staff reported that they often receive feedback from teachers about the (sometimes unexpected) impact that the YPLA has had on them professionally in terms of how they view themselves as leaders.

In term of the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme as a whole, given that the programme has not been rolled out at the scale and pace intended, and has reached considerably fewer schools and pupils than originally envisioned, we would conclude that, at this stage, mentoring and leadership have not yet been fully embedded across the Scottish school system as a whole.

Suggestions for improvement

The following are largely based on suggestions and comments made by participants interviewed for the evaluation.

At school/intervention delivery level:

- MCR should consider providing more information to parents/carers on the activities involved and on the mentor that their child has been matched up with.

- Similarly, Columba 1400 should consider giving more information to school staff and parents/carers to explain the process, and having a greater number of sessions in phase one. Staff felt they would be better able to promote the YPLA and encourage uptake if they were more familiar with the detail of it.

- Schools should aim to embed MCR Co-ordinators as much as possible (e.g. treating them as part of the pupil support team).

- MCR should consider the following suggestions from mentors about ways in which their early stage experiences could be improved: an opportunity to

have a one-to-one conversation with an experienced mentor; more use of breakout rooms in online training; training sessions in the evening so more people can attend; information about what school is like for young people nowadays; and raising awareness of peer resources available for mentors.

At the Scottish Government/strategic level:

- If the forthcoming quantitative analysis and Value for Money assessments of MCR Pathways are positive, review the funding model (including exploring alternative sources of funding) to enable MCR Pathways to be rolled out further and sustained.

- Conduct an evaluability assessment of the Columba 1400 YPLA to assess the feasibility of a quantitative impact and Value for Money assessment, which could then inform funding decisions.

- MCR, DYW and SDS should consider ways in which any duplication of effort across skills/employment-related activities can be avoided. For example, some stakeholders compared MCR Pathways with a programme offered by Career Ready and felt these interventions were available to similar cohorts of young people and had similar aims.

- When bringing different interventions/organisations together to deliver a joint programme:

    - consider first whether a joint programme is likely to add significant value, compared with the interventions being delivered separately, and how practical it is to bring them together

    - allow enough time – several months at least – for relationships to be developed before the delivery stage

    - actively facilitate the development of a shared vison and shared values for the joint programme.

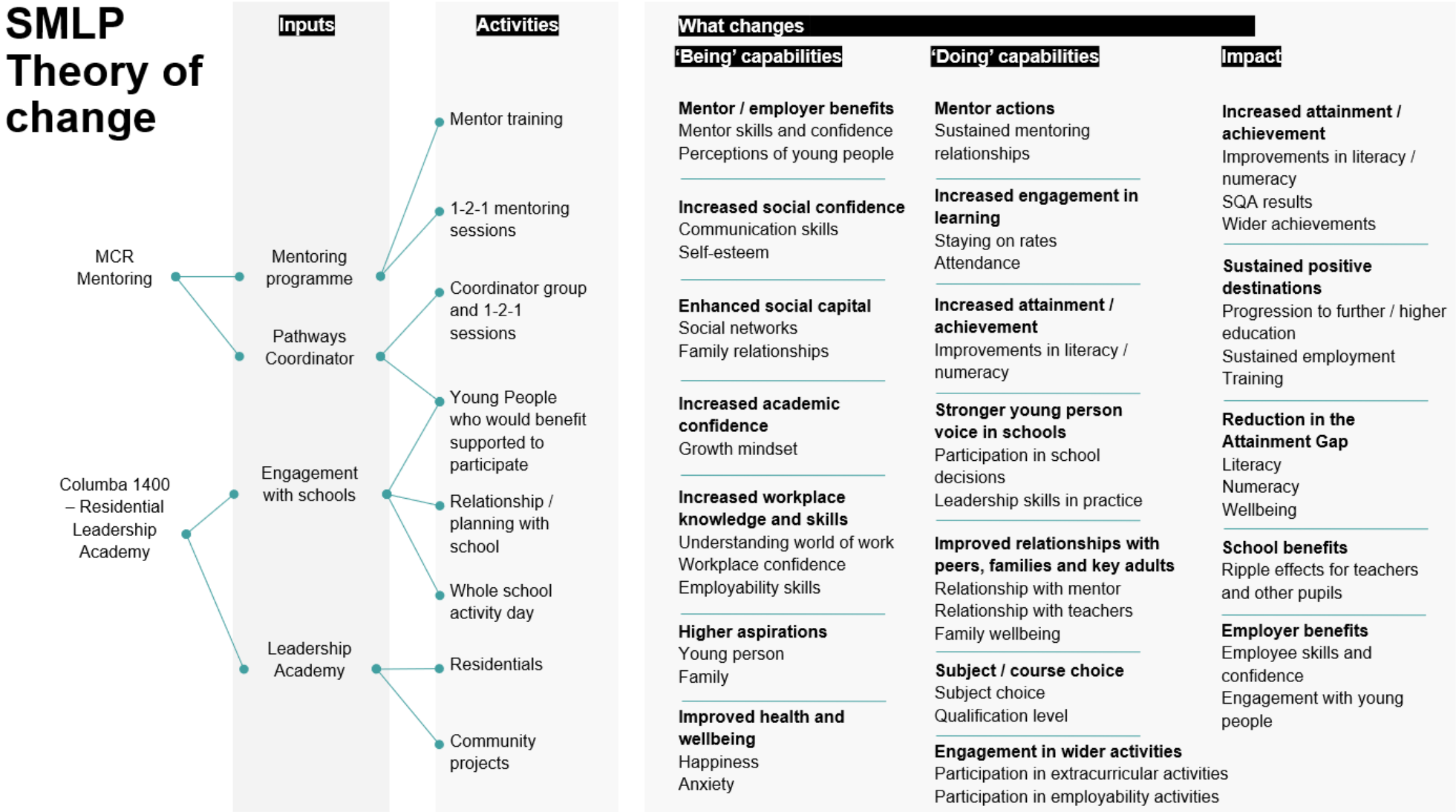
Next steps

The next steps for the evaluation are to conduct an interim quantitative impact assessment and an interim Value for Money assessment of MCR Pathways (reporting in March 2025). Following further qualitative fieldwork (on both MCR and Columba 1400) and quantitative/Value for Money analysis (winter 2025/26), the final evaluation report is due in spring 2026.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework

Theory of Change



Evaluation framework

Table A1.1: Evaluation framework - process

Evaluation questions (process)	Primary source(s) of evidence	2022/3 (Year 1)	2023/4 (Year 2)	2024/5 (Year 3)	2025/6 (Year 4)
Has the Programme been implemented as intended?	Qualitative fieldwork with stakeholders (SG, Hunter Foundation, MCR, C1400, LA Education Leads, school staff)	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
Has the Programme been implemented as intended?	Analysis of delivery monitoring information from MCR and C14002	-	Dec 23-Jan 24	-	Dec 25-Jan 26
What has worked well and what can be improved in the implementation?	Qualitative fieldwork with young people, parents/carers, mentors, MCR Pathways Co-ordinators, employers, and other stakeholders (SG, Hunter Foundation, MCR, C1400, LA Education Leads,school staff)	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
To what extent has the Programme embedded mentoring and leadership across the school system?	Qualitative fieldwork with stakeholders (mainly LA Education Leads, school staff)	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
To what extent has the Programme engaged with and supported young people?	Qualitative fieldwork with young people, parents/carers, mentors, MCR Pathways Co-ordinators, C1400 staff, school staff	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
To what extent has the programme developed a positive relationship with DYW, SDS and the Promise?	Qualitative fieldwork with representatives from DYW, SDS, the Promise, MCR, C1400	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
How is the programme delivery changing and improving over time?	Qualitative fieldwork with young people, parents/carers, mentors, MCR Pathways Co-	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26

Evaluation questions (process)	Primary source(s) of evidence	2022/3 (Year 1)	2023/4 (Year 2)	2024/5 (Year 3)	2025/6 (Year 4)
	ordinators, employers, and other stakeholders (SG, Hunter Foundation, MCR, C1400, LA Education Leads, school staff)				
Are participants being reached as intended?	Analysis of delivery information from MCR and C1400	-	Dec 23-Jan 24	-	Dec 25-Jan 26
Are participants being reached as intended?	Qualitative fieldwork with stakeholders (SG, Hunter Foundation, MCR, C1400, LA Education Leads, school staff)	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26

Table A1.2: Evaluation framework - impact

Evaluation questions (impact)	**Primary source(s) of evidence**	**2022/3** (Year 1)	**2023/4** (Year 2)	**2024/5** (Year 3)	**2025/6** (Year 4)
To what extent has the programme supported the capabilities of young people? (i.e. The 'being' and 'doing' capabilities from the logic model)	Qualitative fieldwork with young people, parents/carers, school staff	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
To what extent has the programme supported the capabilities of young people? (i.e. The 'being' and 'doing' capabilities from the logic model)	Analysis of feedback data from MCR (short 4 question survey for mentors and YP to complete at every session currently being developed, will probably include questions on agency, problem solving and self-worth) and C1400 YPLA survey (self-rated confidence, knowing own values, knowing what is important to me, feeling positive about future, motivation, leadership, working with others) and C1400 WEMWBS (well-being)	-	6 monthly from Autumn '23 to Autumn '25	6 monthly from Autumn '23 to Autumn '25	6 monthly from Autumn '23 to Autumn '25
To what extent has the programme contributed to academic attainment of participating young people?	Quantitative analysis of data on attendance (SG data), attainment (SQA via ADR Scotland), staying- on rates (SG data) and positive destinations post-school (SDS data) for intervention group and control group	May-July 23	May-July 23	May-July 25	-
Did the Programme achieve the expected outcomes?	Quantitative analysis of data on attendance, attainment and staying-on rates for intervention group and control group	May-July 23	May-July 23	May-July 25	-

Evaluation questions (impact)	**Primary source(s) of evidence**	**2022/3** (Year 1)	**2023/4** (Year 2)	**2024/5** (Year 3)	**2025/6** (Year 4)
Did the Programme cause the difference?	Quantitative analysis of data on attendance, attainment and staying-on rates for intervention group and control group	May-July 23	May-July 23	May-July 25	-
Have different groups been impacted in different ways, how and why?	Quantitative analysis of data on attendance, attainment, staying-on rates and positive destinations post-school for intervention group and control group; analysis of differences within the intervention group (e.g. by gender, level/type of care experience)	May-July 23	May-July 23	May-July 25	-
Have different groups been impacted in different ways, how and why?	For the 'how' and 'why'? elements: qualitative fieldwork with young people, parents/carers, mentors, MCR Pathways Co-ordinators, C1400 staff, school staff	-	Oct 23-Jan 24	-	Oct 25-Jan 26
Are young people achieving sustained positive destinations as a result of the Programme?	Quantitative analysis of positive destinations post-school	May-July 23	May-July 23	May-July 25	-

Table A1.3: Evaluation framework – value for money

Evaluation questions (value for money)	**Primary source(s) of evidence**	**2022/3** (Year 1)	**2023/4** (Year 2)	**2024/5** (Year 3)	**2025/6** (Year 4)
What are the costs of the programme and how does the cost of its work compare to initial expectations?	Cost data from SG, MCR, LAs and schools related to the funding and running of the programme: operational costs, staff costs, materials costs, direct funding awards.	-	May-Sept 23	-	May-Sept 25
How does the programme's effectiveness compare to other interventions that could achieve similar outcomes?	Value for Money analysis based on quantitative impact data, costs and benchmarking against other interventions (where data available). (See note 1 for more details).	-	Aug-Dec 23	-	Aug-Dec 25
How can we robustly translate the programme's initial impacts (e.g. on positive destinations) into longer term monetisable benefits for themselves and others?	Cost Benefit Analysis will focus primarily on academic/employment destinations associated with mentoring using data collated from educational datasets. The value for money analysis will apply different modeling approaches to estimate the lifetime monetary benefits to the individual depending on whether the impacts of mentoring were associated with academic or vocational qualifications/apprenticeship placements. Other outcomes like attendance can be monetised using indicative cost savings to the exchequer related to truancy. (See note 2 for more details).	-	Aug-Dec 23	-	Aug-Dec 25
How do the monetised benefits compare to costs, and how should we account for other important benefits	Cost Benefit Analysis will focus primarily on academic/employment destinations associated with mentoring using data collated from educational	-	Aug-Dec 23	-	Aug-Dec 25

Evaluation questions (value for money)	Primary source(s) of evidence	2022/3 (Year 1)	2023/4 (Year 2)	2024/5 (Year 3)	2025/6 (Year 4)
that are too difficult to monetise?	datasets. The value for money analysis will apply different modeling approaches to estimate the lifetime monetary benefits to the individual depending on whether the impacts of mentoring were associated with academic or vocational qualifications/apprenticeship placements. Other outcomes like attendance can be monetised using indicative cost savings to the exchequer related to truancy. (See note 2 for more details).				
Where and how can we monetize improved capabilities that do not immediately lead to direct economic benefits	Cost Benefit Analysis will focus primarily on academic/employment destinations associated with mentoring using data collated from educational datasets. The value for money analysis will apply different modeling approaches to estimate the lifetime monetary benefits to the individual depending on whether the impacts of mentoring were associated with academic or vocational qualifications/apprenticeship placements. Other outcomes like attendance can be monetised using indicative cost savings to the exchequer related to truancy. (See note 2 for more details).	-	Aug-Dec 23	-	Aug-Dec 25

Appendix 2: text from young person information sheet

Information leaflet

Research about the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme

The Scottish Government wants to know how well the Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme has been working and what difference, if any, it's making for young people.

They have asked Ipsos Scotland (an independent research organisation) to speak to young people to help them find out. Before taking part, it's important that you understand why this research is taking place and what it will involve.

How can I help?

They have asked Ipsos Scotland (an independent research organisation) to speak to young people to help them find out. Before taking part, it's important that you understand why this research is taking place and what it will involve.

The Scottish Mentoring and Leadership Programme includes Young Scottish Talent (delivered by MCR Pathways) and the Columba 1400 Young Person's Leadership Academy (YPLA).

You've been randomly picked to take part in the research because you take part in one or both of these programmes. We hope you can share your views!

What does the research involve?

Taking part involves a short in-person one-to-one interview with a researcher from Ipsos (photos on next page). It will last around 40 minutes or one school period. The interview will happen in June 2024 and will take place in school.

The interview will be relaxed and informal and you don't need to prepare anything to take part. You can have a friend there if you would like.

For your information, we will also be interviewing some parents/carers to hear their views on the programme. If your parent/carer takes part, this will be a completely separate interview to yours, and they will not hear what you said in your interview.

The researcher will ask you about things like:

- What kind of activities you've taken part in as part of the Programme
- How you feel now compared to the start of the Programme

- If there's anything you've done differently since the start of the Programme
- If there's anything you would change about the Programme

There are no right or wrong answers. We're just keen to hear about your experiences.

How will my information be used?

We would like to audio-record our discussions (but will only do so with your agreement). Your responses to the interview will be completely confidential and anonymous and will not be seen by anybody outside of Ipsos Scotland and the transcriber. All data will be destroyed after the evaluation is finished.

Ipsos will write a report of the findings for the Scottish Government. The report will be published and is likely to use quotes, but we will not name or identify anyone. If you do not want us to quote anything you say, please just let us know.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely your choice whether or not you take part and you can change your mind at any time without giving us a reason. You can also choose not to answer individual questions and/or leave the discussion completely.

What are my rights?

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a set of rules and regulations designed to protect the privacy and personal data of individuals. We have a legal duty to inform you about why we are collecting information from you for the research.

We provide this information in our Privacy Notice which should be read alongside this information sheet. It outlines what information we will collect and why, and your rights.

What happens now?

If you are under 16, we will need to ask your parent or carer for permission before we speak to you. We have a separate information sheet for them.

If you are happy to take part, please speak to the person who gave you this information leaflet. This might have been your teacher or Young Scottish Talent coordinator.

If there is anything we can do to make it easier for you to take part, please let us know using the contact details below.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information about the research, or have any questions, you can speak to your teacher or Young Scottish Talent coordinator. Or you can get in touch with Ipsos using the contact details below.

Call or message [researcher] on: [mobile number]

Email Ipsos at: Scotland-SMLP@ipsos.com

Appendix 3: capabilities and statements

- I feel more confident in social situations (Increased social confidence)
- I am more comfortable speaking to other people (communication skills)
- I feel better about myself (self-esteem)
- My relationships with the people I live with are better (enhanced social capital: family relationships and improved relationships with peers, families and key adults: family wellbeing)
- I have more people I can talk to about things (enhanced social capital: social networks)
- I feel happier (Improved health and wellbeing: happiness)
- I feel less anxious (Improved health and wellbeing: anxiety)
- I am getting on better with my friends (Improved relationships with peers, families and key adults)
- I have more belief in my ability to do well in school/gain qualifications (increased academic confidence: growth mindset)
- I am aiming higher in terms of what I would like to do after school (higher aspirations*:* young person)
- I am thinking more about the subjects I need to choose at school to help me get the kind of job I might want in the future (Subject / course choice: *s*ubject choice)
- I am doing more things that might help me get the kind of job I want in the future (engagement in wider activities: Participation in employability activities)
- I plan to stay on longer at school than I did before (Increased engagement in learning: staying on rates and *s*ubject / course choice: qualification level)
- My attendance at school has improved (Increased engagement in learning: attendance)
- I am doing better in my schoolwork (increased attainment/achievement)
- I know more about the kinds of jobs I might like (understanding world of work)

- I feel more confident about doing well at a job in the future (Understanding world of work: workplace confidence and employability skills)

- I feel more involved in school decisions (stronger young person voice in schools: participation in school decisions)

- At school, I have been able to put into place some of the leadership skills I have learnt (stronger young person voice in schools: leadership skills in practice)

- I am getting on better with my teachers (improved relationships with peers, families and key adults: Relationship with teachers)

- I find it easier to talk to teachers (improved relationships with peers, families and key adults: Relationship with teachers)

- I am more comfortable speaking to my mentor than I was at the start of the mentoring (Improved relationships with peers, families and key adults: Relationship with mentor) – used in MCR interviews only.

- I am doing more activities out of school (Engagement in wider activities: Participation in extracurricular activities)

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

☐ are available via an alternative route

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact: social-justice-analysis@gov.scot for further information.

☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

This publication is available at **www.gov.scot**

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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