

4 Findings

4.1 Structure of findings

Several key findings help to delineate the nature and complexity of the **REFLECT** programme:

- Responses to the application process
- Management and delivery of the programme
- Matching of co-mentors
- Examples of shared foci selected by co-mentors
- Training Days
- Gathering Days

4.2 Responses to the application process

The responses to the three questions in the online application form were wide-ranging but were a good indicator of the variety of starting points at the beginning of the co-mentoring process. Co-mentors' responses were essential to the matching process but also showed why teachers and creative professionals wanted to take part, what they hoped to learn and what their expectations of the process were.

There was a marked similarity between responses to the first and second questions - *Why would you like to be a co-mentor?* and *How will this benefit your practice, work, school, business or organisation?*

The third question - *Can you give an example of reflective practice in your work?* - showed that participants understood reflective practice to be intrinsic to creative/arts activities. Many responses simply outlined a recent involvement in creative/arts activities rather than actually describing ways in which respondents had engaged in reflective practice per se. Numerous responses also provided examples of involvement in creative project evaluations and these too were seen as examples of reflective practice.

The initial information received by co-mentors was not clear enough about the programme content and though the application process helped clarify what the programme was about, responses showed that many respondents needed more explanation. In the light of experience, the language developed by the Management team during the programme would have been more effective in the initial marketing communications.

4.3 Management and delivery of the programme

4.3.1 Timescale

The programme was originally planned to run for 12 months from March 2007. Extension to July 2008 was agreed in November 2007, in recognition of the complexity of the programme and its innovative nature. Nonetheless, the pressurised timescale presented significant challenges both to the management of the programme and to the ability of co-mentors to participate effectively.

Programme set-up took place between December 2006 and March 2007. This included recruiting the Management team, one of whom could only start in March 2007; publicising the programme; implementing the application process; creating a storage and retrieval system; establishing the National Advisory Group and Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs); organising 9 Training Days and 18 Gathering Days; and mapping the Evaluation process.


It would have been preferable to have launched the Training Days after the summer break but the timeframe ruled that out, so they were held between 12 June and 4 July 2007. The relatively short notice and time of year (particularly significant for teachers) led to lower than hoped for attendance. Given the pair-focused nature of the **REFLECT** process, it was frustrating for those co-mentors whose partner could not attend the Training Day. The inability to attend Training Days impacted on the success of some co-mentoring relationships.

Similarly, pressure of time also impacted on the scheduling of the Gathering Days and the involvement of Regional Advisory Groups.

The tight timescale also allowed little flexibility for those co-mentors who encountered unexpected difficulties in their workplace. This led some to withdraw reluctantly from the programme.

4.3.2 The scope and role of Programme Manager

The scope of Programme Managers role has required an ability to manage the project in detail as well as see the whole programme within the bigger picture of creativity and learning. Both managers have been involved in data tracking and analysis; reporting and monitoring; recruitment; networking and communications; budget management; and co-mentor support. Most importantly, the role has needed a level of understanding of reflective practice, creativity and learning. This has been key to the role of 'relationship broker' that managers have held. It has also been essential in liaising with partners at a regional and national level, in making connections with other programmes both in and out of The Sage Gateshead and in modelling the ethos of **REFLECT** throughout, especially in the relationships built with co-mentors and in the scribing and sharing of co-mentor's experience. The role has also required highly developed forward - and lateral! - thinking skills, and a commitment to innovation, particularly in relation to the development of content for the Handbook, the Training and Gathering Days and the National Conference.



Managers have spent a great deal of time travelling and have needed to be flexible with the demands of the timescales. Personally, they have maintained a lively sense of humour as well as being open and approachable at all times. All in all, a complex set of roles that impacted directly on the effectiveness of the delivery of the programme. From April 2008 the team was reduced to one Programme Manager (agreed for budgetary reasons), which exerted further pressure on management and delivery.

4.3.3 Brokerage of co-mentoring

It was essential to have a third party broker to make suitable and effective matches. It was judged important to match a co-mentor with someone who is 'out of their own sphere', someone who adds value and someone who may facilitate unexpected outcomes for the individual.

Time is needed to discover good matches; and yet a protracted recruitment process can easily make co-mentor pairs feel concern that they are 'out of sync' with others. The targeting approach used in **REFLECT** was not always successful, and pressure of time sometimes undermined the process.

Geographical closeness has positive and negative impacts. Some co-mentors felt that being far apart made it easier to meet as individuals because there was no possibility of building a partnership with the co-mentor's organisation; other co-mentors believed that geographical proximity to each other meant that their relationship was less pressurised and gave more time and space for exploration and development of insights.

4.3.4 Value for money

Cost per participant

The development of the **REFLECT** programme and its delivery costs, separated from evaluation, conference and web development, total £282,126.50. This is the equivalent to £2,044 per participant. Without an honorarium payment to participants, this cost per head would be reduced further to £1,544. It is important to bear in mind that this was a national pilot programme that has developed a co-mentoring framework, handbook and training materials as well as a delivery team. Future programme budgets would potentially need less development time, thereby reducing the cost.

Transferable models

There are many possibilities for bespoke training and development, which may present more cost-effective cross-sector mentoring programme models. This could include clusters of organisations or schools interested in initiating a cross-sector co-mentoring programme. By investing in growing and diversifying the team of **REFLECT** facilitators, a future phase of the programme could offer bespoke solutions, offering training and development opportunities to interested regions and localities, including Local Education Authorities, networks, clusters of schools and cultural organisations, as well as other organisations within and beyond the education and creative and cultural sectors to support cross-sector co-mentoring relationships.

Taking into consideration the essential components for delivering a co-mentoring programme, it would be possible to deliver programmes at a local, regional or national level. It is not appropriate to offer a definitive model to lead and manage a successful co-mentoring programme as it would need to be designed to meet the particular needs of the co-mentor cohort. It would also be crucial for those initiating a programme to familiarise themselves with the **REFLECT** evaluation and lessons learned, and to contact the **REFLECT** programme management team for advice where appropriate.

The costing of any model would need to include the minimum essential components:

- Programme management to lead publicity, recruitment and matching co-mentors; organising local, regional or national advisory meetings; coordination of training, facilitators, venues and catering; ongoing mentor support; part-time administrative support
- Training and development days including facilitators' fees, planning and delivery, venues and catering; travel; production of handbook and other materials
- Suggested Honorarium of £500 per participant to cover expenses for involvement in the programme
- Knowledge sharing and dissemination
- Evaluation and knowledge development

Funds for deeper evaluation of impact and tracking are strongly recommended and would be additional to these costs.

4.4 Matching of co-mentors

4.4.1 Significance of the matching process

The matching of co-mentors proved to be one of the most important, sensitive and complex aspects of the **REFLECT** programme. The Regional Advisory Groups were crucial in guiding this process and as they knew the nuances of their particular area well, they were rigorous in their selection of co-mentors. Not all applicants were selected to be matched. As a result, the Programme Managers worked with partners to identify further matches. These were less successful because the impetus for taking part had not come from the participant.

The significance of the matching process is well summed up by Dr Lamont in her conclusion to the Questionnaire Evaluation (see Chapter 5):

The strongest relationship between factors found (in the questionnaire) is that between the effectiveness of the matching process between co-mentors and the overall effectiveness of the programme in terms of personal, professional, organisational and creative outcomes.... The problems identified which could be addressed in future also centre around the nature of the co-mentor relationship. Having clear expectations and requirements seems to be key in setting up a fruitful co-mentoring relationship, and if this does not happen, frustration can set in.

For many co-mentors the matching process was effective but from some questionnaire responses there was evidence of frustration in the early stages of the programme. For example:

I went through a very difficult matching process through no fault of **REFLECT** but lost two co-mentors before we had even started. Luckily I knew a teacher who would be suitable and decided to be my co-mentor (**Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator**).

(It is important) to ensure a vigilant follow-up for re-matching co-mentors whose partner co-mentors opt out of the programme. It has been highly frustrating not to have a partner to get the most out of the **REFLECT** programme which I have diligently attended and enjoyed (**Art Teacher**).

4.4.2 Final number of co-mentors

The number of co-mentors has fluctuated in the course of the project but final figures on 26 February 2008 are represented in this diagram drawn up by the Programme Managers.

Numbers of co-mentors (on 26.02.08)

Region	Target	Initially matched by RAGS	Active in first wave	Withdrawn from 1st wave	Moved to second wave	Active in second wave	Withdrawn from second wave	TOTAL
East	36	12	10	0	3	7	2	22
East Midlands	30	22	8	12	3	3	1	27
London	36	16	14	1	1	3	2	21
North East	16	24	20	4	0	4	2	30
North West	40	16	10	7	1	1	0	19
South East	42	10	10	10	2	2	2	26
South West	34	8	8	6	0	0	2	16
West Midlands	34	18	12	3	1	3	2	21
Yorkshire	32	22	12	7	0	0	4	23
Total	300	148	104	50	11	23	17	205

TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CO-MENTORS = 138

(active in first wave + moved to second wave + active in second wave)

TOTAL NUMBER OF CO-MENTOR PAIRS = 69

4.5 Examples of shared foci selected by co-mentors

As was indicated in Chapter 2.5, each co-mentoring partnership in **REFLECT** had to draw up a learning agreement that related to a shared focus. Not surprisingly, these ranged widely depending on shared interests and individual needs. For instance, some co-mentors felt they were at a transitional stage in their professional life and were seeking greater clarification about their future direction. They saw **REFLECT** as an opportunity to review and reflect on their own practice. Others considered that the co-mentoring process might enable them to respond to specific issues that concerned them: for example, reconnecting with their creative energy; strengthening their creative leadership; rekindling their motivation; exploring ways of transforming their organisation; addressing the challenges of the curriculum in a more creative way. The shared focus provided the parameters of a structured reflective conversation that, if effective, would act as a springboard for change. Examples of shared foci include:

Creativity

- Nurturing creativity in others
- Sharing the creative process, using creative ways to illustrate, document and support colleagues
- Developing ourselves as creative learners and leaders
- Demonstrating the value of creativity on a young person's and adult's personal development, ensuring we have a shared language which can adequately describe the impacts and benefits of a creative education
- Increasing confidence and skills thereby enabling the school to be a creative learning organisation and to understand and experience the creative needs of a school community and the best forms of engagement
- Developing an understanding of the barriers to and opportunities for creativity across departments within school and partnerships with external creative businesses
- Exploring how creative learning processes can be applied to developing pupils' learning; and how learning outside the classroom can impact on learning and how it can be evaluated
- Exploring the transformational role that creativity can play in all areas of school improvement
- Exploring what is creativity and creative learning; how do we create genuine opportunities for creative learning?

Specific areas of the curriculum

- Exploring the place of visual art in the Primary curriculum
- Exploring visual thinking
- Using film archives as an educational resource
- Exploring different approaches to creative engagement with science; why do we do what we do?
- Exploring cross-curricular creativity in Year 7
- Exploring effective activities for the new Key Stage 3 curriculum and how we measure their impact
- Exploring the use of music across a whole school with an emphasis on times of reflection
- Exploring the place of drama in the learning environment
- Exploring kinaesthetic learning and extended outcomes

Partnerships and collaborative ways of working

- Analysing our practice in a peer-learning relationship within the context of our current working environment
- Developing partnership working
- Establishing a set of agreed outcomes around learning about each other's roles, sustainable partnerships and working with young people
- Investigating ways in which the creative and media sector can be fully engaged with the development and delivery of Creative and Media Diplomas
- Exploring how community organisations can support the learning of children with special educational needs

Professional and personal development

- Looking at how we can put our own creative practice back at the heart of what we are doing professionally and the impact it will have on ourselves, our projects and our organisations
- Exploring developments at work and sharing experiences to maximise work outcomes for others while improving personal ways of working and wellbeing
- Dealing with transition in our working lives
- Developing our skills base and sharing the outcome with others
- Learning to be reflective about our own practice
- Exploring the question 'why do we do what we do?'

Organisations and leadership

- Mapping paths for organisational success
- Building confidence in our own creative leadership in our work
- Sharing management and leadership issues, following both of us recently taking on new roles
- Exploring the way we see our team and our team perceives us, and the role that we play as leaders or as members of our team
- Examining how creative artists who find themselves managing arts organisations and projects handle the need for compliance and accountability

4.6 Training Days

4.6.1 Facilitation

In the first round of Training, between 12 June and 4 July 2007, the sessions were led by three trainers:

Dave Camlin - Director, Sound Wave (5 sessions)

Helena Gaunt - Assistant Principal, Research and Academic Development, Guildhall School of Music & Drama (2 sessions)

Judith Webster - Director, Nuance; Course Leader, PG Dip Creative Leadership, Royal College of Music (2 sessions)

Each training trainer worked closely with one or both Programme Managers. Dave Camlin was the main leader of all subsequent Training and Gathering Days. The Trainer was essential to the success of both the Training and Gathering Days. At the end of each session comprehensive notes were compiled by one of the Programme Managers and circulated to all co-mentors. This was an effective way of building up a 'community of practice'.

4.6.2 Structure of Regional Training Day

The aims of the day were:

- To support co-mentors to develop the knowledge, skills and insight required to establish and develop their co-mentoring relationship
- To deepen an understanding of the co-mentoring process
- To explore key issues arising from the co-mentoring process
- To meet your co-mentor

The structure of the session gave a clear background to the programme and included an introduction to the **REFLECT** Handbook and the co-mentoring framework. Other activities gave participants the opportunity to test out and reflect on what the co-mentoring process might feel like, exploring key questions and asking for feedback on how conversations had felt and identifying what participants might take on into their relationships.

The emphasis was especially focused on asking reflective questions. For example, an initial exercise involved co-mentoring pairs asking each other:

- Why do you do what you do?
- Why do you want to be a co-mentor?

Group discussions centred on examining possible co-mentoring scenarios:

- In what ways might you encourage each other to reflect on their own story? What questions would you ask to help them clarify and deepen their understanding of themselves, their history and their personal and professional journey?
- How might you help each other to explore collaborative ways of working? Identify questions that might help deepen their understanding of partnership and what can be achieved together.
- How would you enable each other to identify the elements needed to develop a culture of creative learning within their organisation? Give examples of the kind of questions you might ask.
- In your co-mentoring relationship, identify ways of challenging each other's perspectives/approaches in a supportive way. Give examples of questions you might ask.

4.6.3 Responses to the Training Days

(These notes were drawn together by the Programme Managers in conjunction with the Lead Trainer)

4.6.3.1 Responses to the question 'why do you do what you do?'

Co-mentors were asked to think about the process of asking each other this 'why' question. The reflective process encouraged depth and a truthful answer. It encouraged them to look inward and raised further questions. Co-mentors learned a lot about each other because the process of questioning got to core issues quickly. Responses included:

Individual perceptions

The need to be honest with oneself – to be self aware and open to the learning journey; it's a challenge to talk about oneself! It's good to step back, be out of the box, and examine ones motivation

Characteristics of good co-mentoring

Trust; being non-judgemental; equality; no hierarchy; rich learning coming from diversity; making connections and common ground; having no agenda; thinking about the quality of ones learning; empathy; ensuring there's time to take ones learning away and to reflect

Ways of communicating

Quality of questioning; active listening and not interrupting helps your co-mentor reveal their own story; you can show you're listening actively through your body language; mirroring back what your co-mentor has said; using a visual description of where you are; make art together – a non-verbal exchange can help you get on the inside of each other; blue sky thinking – opening the horizons, voicing the possibilities

The process

Aiming at a balance between an organic process and structure; having clear ground rules, boundaries and trust; questioning is not searching for an answer but a way of facilitating reflection; listening skills are necessary in forming good questions; seeing yourself through a different pair of eyes; being 'in the moment', being an observer of the process; expecting the unexpected; logging information for later; people process information in different ways and need different lengths of time to respond; conversation refreshes your motivation

4.6.3.2 Responses to the question 'why do you want to be a co-mentor?'

Co-mentors came with many personal and professional reasons for being involved in **REFLECT**. For some, the emphasis on personal development over gains for their organisations gave them a new perspective. Responses included:

Balance between personal and organisational needs

It's important to ask 'Why?'; it's 'a moment of change'; the tension between personal needs and organisational needs; personal development is healthy for the individual - also for the organisation; there are lots of ways to feed back your experiences to your organisation; it's a relief to be wearing just one hat; it can be difficult to leave outcomes behind

Partnership

Being part of a shared learning process; learning and finding out from others; understanding each other's culture of work; friendship; a shared journey - an opportunity to 'walk' alongside someone else

Time and Space

Having time and space for thinking, for reflective practice, for challenging and reviewing practice; reflective practice is an integral part of who you are

Making connections

Having permission to play, explore and take risks; testing boundaries; connecting back to the classroom; interest in learning spaces and physical environment; establishing a co-mentoring process in everyday work; justifying and being able to articulate different ways of working; responding to the developing world and

new technologies; exploring identity – fear of exploring chaos, getting down to the crux of who you are; establishing long term sustainable relationships; seeing a way back into artistic practice; gaining confidence in your own understanding and your own opinions; strengthening communication - taking ideas to a broader range of people; career development

4.6.3.3 Responses to creating a learning agreement

Co-mentors were asked to create a learning agreement and a shared focus as a basis for their relationship. Initial responses included:

Practical ways of working together; meeting structures, venues and times; underlying values - your commitment; boundaries - good boundaries lead to freedom; setting out your commitment keeps you on track; it should be personal to you and your co-mentor and informed by your shared focus; agree as to how you will challenge each other; be clear about your structure

4.6.3.4 Responses to questions arising from discussions

How would you define conversation?

Dialogue; connecting to context; bringing our own narratives to conversations; being open to yourself; listening to your inner voice; sharing your own vulnerability; body language/ non-verbal; asking the right question; not having a recipe; active listening; re-connecting with response - it is good teaching; curiosity and passion for learning; tool for leadership and transformation; conversation as a way of conducting your life

What is reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity?

Reflection = description 'I'm feeling this...'; critical reflection = critical analysis; reflexivity = tacit understanding, a non-verbal exchange/ understanding/ meaning; recording your relationship by collecting things that trigger shared memories; visualising and demonstrating where you are in your own journey; it's qualitative not quantitative - reflexivity isn't measurable but more demanding to achieve; being aware of terminology - establishing a common vocabulary with your co-mentor

What might a structure of a co-mentor meeting be?

What boundaries should be considered? What is OK to share? Personal/ professional/ therapy - what are the perceptions of the language we use? Does it need to be shared? How do you marry the personal with the professional? Importance of context; needing a clear understanding of the shared focus

What are open questions?

Needing to include active listening and hearing; to be responsive; not having pre-planned questions; remembering you bring your own history and background into the conversation; needing to know

something about your co-mentor and their organisation - would entail research and conversation. How much knowledge would you need? Can you ask questions if you don't have enough information?

What is your role of outsider/ critical friend?

Separate out issues from personalities; suggestions might be taken more seriously from an outsider; reflecting back makes people look at things differently – it helps co-mentor to come to conclusions themselves; giving advice is all right so long as it's in the learning agreement; you are there to support your co-mentor on their journey

4.7 Gathering Days

4.7.1 Aims and structure

Nine Regional Gathering Days were held in October 2007 for the first cohort of co-mentors and a further nine in January and February. In the Autumn there was a common starting point and aims for each session.


- To provide co-mentors with the knowledge, skills and insight required to establish and develop their co-mentoring relationship
- To deepen an understanding of the co-mentoring process.
- To explore key issues arising from the co-mentoring process.

Each day shared a similar structure exploring what co-mentors are learning in terms of common values, shared vocabulary, challenges and key elements that are most effective in shifting and informing practice. The afternoon session focused on the needs and experiences of the participants. Through a series of activities, co-mentors explored and found ways to articulate the internal processes which are part of co-mentoring.

Regional Advisory Group members were invited to meet the co-mentors over lunch. This was useful for RAG members and helped to frame subsequent conversations with the **REFLECT** team about opportunities for dissemination in each region.

At the end of each day, co-mentors gave feedback and shared what they would be taking away with them for further thought and action. The days were scribed for evaluation purposes and collated notes were distributed to all participants. As in the case of the Training Days, these notes and reflections were very thorough and they helped to inform the substance of the second round of Gathering Days.

Seventy three co-mentors attended the first set of Gathering Days. All co-mentors received the full set of dates for the programme in July and in the initial Training Day they were advised to think about how the Gathering Days would fit within their timetable of meetings. However, some co-mentors chose to begin their relationship after the summer holidays and felt that this day was too early in the process for them. As a result they chose not to attend the day and aimed to attend the next day in January or February. Although the



Management team was aware of this issue, the timescale limited the possibility to delay the day any further. Co-mentors also had the option of joining the second cohort of co-mentors.

4.7.2 Observations from co-mentors

From responses in the questionnaires those co-mentors who attended both Gathering Days found this a good opportunity to strengthen the relationship with their partner but also to share knowledge, ideas and experience with colleagues through group discussion and practical exercises. They appreciated the creative approach taken towards problem-solving and benefited from time to reflect in a supportive environment. In general people valued the style of leadership which provided an effective balance between structure and freedom.

4.8 Response to the Training and Gathering Days from the Lead Trainer

As the Lead Trainer for the Training and Gathering Days, Dave Camlin was asked for his observations on the training process. Here are a few of his comments that help to place his approach in the wider context.

It became clearer as the sessions developed that a key part of my role would be in challenging participants' preconceptions about what they could expect from the programme. The majority of participants came clearly representing their organisations, and were initially interested principally in the benefits to those organisations. I think one of the really exciting possibilities afforded through co-mentoring is the opportunity for people to focus on their own personal motivations, and how that impacts on their role within their organisation, and in turn how their organisation operates within its sector. ... The co-mentoring process is a clear and useful way of enabling participants to recognise, value and harness their personal potency, which they can then apply within their working environment.

The co-mentoring process provides a unique opportunity for individuals from different backgrounds to meet as equals, and to hold a mirror up to each other's practice in a spirit of mutual support, facilitation and reflection. While the resulting benefits to host organisations from the co-mentoring process (and indeed between education and the Arts generally) will clearly be considerable, it became clear that it was very important to establish and emphasise that the focus of the programme is on the individual and their development. If that process is effective then the creative personal relationships which develop between co-mentors will be reflected in evolving cultures of creative learning within host organisations and across both sectors; a 'bottom-up' approach to creativity with the individual as both the catalyst and the creative spark.

I find this approach to re-thinking how arts and education interact both refreshing and exciting, by-passing as it does all of the usual challenges that come with hierarchical mentoring structures and

performance-related coaching strategies. Significantly it also 'debunks' the widely accepted belief (myth?) that creative practice is something that is only found in the work of creative practitioners and Arts organisations. It re-empowers school teachers by valuing their own creative process, and helps artists to focus on how to improve the creative dynamic in educational establishments rather than simply on how to deliver their own 'creative' activity for schools. Significantly, the co-mentoring process casts both partners as equals, in a non-judgemental, non-hierarchical way, which in turn means that the quality of learning going on is much richer.

Dave Camlin

Director, Sound Wave

