

5 Questionnaire Evaluation

This chapter firstly provides a summary of the questionnaire data received and secondly analyses key variables to explore relationships in the data, with the aim of finding out more about how a wide range of **REFLECT** participants felt about the programme. A full set of descriptive statistics for each question can be found in Appendix 10.2; statistical tests are summarised in Appendix 10.3.

5.1 Demographics

Questionnaires were received from 49 participants, including 22 from schools and 27 from creative and cultural organisations. They were drawn from every region in England, with the largest group from the North East (20%). Most had been in their current role for 3-10 years (26 participants), with 13 having less than 3 years' experience and 10 having had more than 10 years' experience.

5.2 Introductions to REFLECT

Most participants first heard about the opportunity of being involved in **REFLECT** from professional sources, including mailings to their organisation (15 participants) and from work colleagues (14 participants). Only one respondent had seen an advertisement in a specialist magazine (B Daily and newsletter) and none had seen any advertisements in the general press.

In terms of the initial information provided, most responses were towards the positive end of the scale. 58% found the initial information about the programme's aims quite or very clear; 50% found the programme objectives very or quite clear; 70% found the application process quite or very clear and helpful; and 70% found the selection and matching process for themselves and their co-mentor quite or very effective. However, responses were less positive in relation to the initial information concerning the programme's expectations of the participants, with only 35% finding this quite or very clear and most respondents finding it only averagely clear (48%).

Many respondents were not aware of the process behind selection and matching of co-mentors. Some respondents found the selection and matching process not to be particularly effective (a total of 14%, or 7 participants, finding it not very or not at all effective, with 10% finding it not at all effective). Negative responses to the matching process from the open-ended questions focused on lack of consultation about the organisations people were linked with and a lack of awareness about how the matching was undertaken: one respondent noted that although their co-mentoring relationship was now working well, a lack of ownership over choosing to take part from both parties had led to some delays in each party working out their role. Several respondents also noted problems of co-mentors pulling out of the programme at various stages, being unable to attend training days, and so on. When problems arose with co-mentors, these seem to have partly coloured the individual respondents' impression of the programme. For example, one respondent referred to frustration with their co-mentor as one of their overall points of evaluation. However this did not extend to frustration with the other activities such as the effectiveness of Training Days.

Respondents also identified factors that could have improved the matching process, mentioning similar factors to the negative responses including geographical proximity and availability of individuals. Time was emphasised as being important to develop a better understanding of the different professional roles and interests between co-mentors. Several commented that individuals rather than organisations should take the initiatives to ensure greater ownership of the process, and improved communication between the organisations and the individuals. Some identified the need for all those involved to make a firm commitment at the start of the programme, which might avoid the problems of drop-out. Many respondents commented that they were unaware of the details of the matching process, which meant that sometimes different goals, ambitions and levels of experience were held by the parties matched together without a shared understanding of why they had been paired.


However, 27% found the selection and matching process to be quite effective and the largest proportion (44%, or 21 respondents) found it to have been very effective. From the open ended responses, effective matching seemed to result from similar interests and levels of experience, and shared understandings and goals about learning and about the different roles involved in the co-mentoring process. Other positive factors included similar ages, the ability to talk and listen, and shared specialisms, and a few respondents noted different outlooks as being beneficial for the mentoring relationship:

I think that pairing school teachers with arts practitioners who work in more informal settings has proven to be a very positive experience for many in our regional groups, and I certainly have found it useful to compare my own methods of working with someone who (necessarily) has a different approach to music education (**Creative Practitioner**).

Other practicalities were mentioned such as distance (for some participants this was a positive factor, while for others distance had been problematic). Several respondents were already in working relationships with their mentors or knew them through personal and professional contacts. Although some relationships had worked well, as noted earlier many respondents were unaware of the precise matching process:

In our case I think it was a lot of luck - I am sure there was more to it than that but we were staggered when we first met and spoke how much we had in common in terms of my specialist area and her personal interest- not all this information was included in the application so we decided we were just very lucky (**Creative Practitioner**).

Positive relationships with co-mentors also coloured respondents' evaluations of the programme. For example, one respondent who referred to "shared commitment and enthusiasm" in their co-mentoring relationship also rated all elements of the programme as having been effective or very effective, and concluded that "the programme has far exceeded my personal and professional expectations. I could never have imagined the impact my involvement in the project would have".



The honorarium provided co-mentoring pairs with the opportunity to meet together without the burden of loss of costs to business/organisation (this was a particular incentive for freelance workers) and assisted schools in paying for supply teaching. Some felt the honorarium made the process seem more formal and professional, and provided co-mentoring pairs with the freedom to engage in activities without financial worry. The honorarium was most often used for supply cover for respondents who teach, and by those from creative organisations to cover costs incurred by them being absent from work. Other uses included general expenses like refreshments at meetings and travel expenses, as well as uses directly tied in with creative experiences like museum, gallery, concert and theatre visits, art materials, and music for use in the school environment. Seven respondents did not comment or were unable to comment about their use of the honorarium; three because they had not received it and four because they had not used it yet. Some practitioners noted that the honorarium did not support freelance time, which was seen as a limitation.

5.3 Training Day and Gathering Days

67% of respondents had attended a Training Day and 88% had attended a Gathering Day. 32 respondents (65%) attended both a Training Day and at least one Gathering Day. In general respondents were positive about these experiences, with 85% of those who attended Training Days finding them quite or very effectively structured and led, and 67% finding themselves quite or very clear about the next steps in the co-mentoring process after the Training Day. Similarly, 81% of those who attended Gathering Days found them quite or very effectively structured and led, and 81% found themselves quite or very clear about the next steps in the co-mentoring process after the Gathering Day. Most respondents had attended two Gathering Days (45%), with 30.5% attending one and 12% attending 3; only 5 respondents had not attended any Gathering Days (10%).

Respondents indicated that they liked the flexible approach of the Training Days, and the opportunity for discussion that they provided. Trainers were praised for their relaxed, flexible attitudes and for facilitating discussion, and the opportunity to participate in a 'meeting of minds' and on an equitable footing was often highlighted as a positive feature. Several themes emerged from participants' responses to the open question of how the Training Day could have been strengthened. A recurring point was made that all co-mentors should attend the Training Day, thus ensuring that everyone could meet their partners. A number of respondents also suggested that more time should be given to allow delegates to network. Five respondents reported being unsure of aspects of the process like the aims of the day, and indicated that they were confused during discussions. Subsequently these respondents then indicated they were unclear of the next steps at the end of the Training Day. Another factor of concern for two participants (both from the London region) were delegates who dominated discussions and prevented others from contributing their thoughts.

Respondents cited a range of factors for the effectiveness of the Gathering Days. In particular, the Gathering Days were praised for their informal, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Respondents also enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas and meet with their co-mentor and with other co-mentors: one respondent noted that the notion of a co-mentoring pair might be extended into a co-mentoring forum in relation to these events. The majority of responses were very positive and praised the leadership and facilitation of the Gathering Days, and the flexibility of the organisation was well received. One respondent noted that being able to attend days in other regions as well as their own was enormously helpful in order to facilitate attendance, working around their own rather inflexible timetable. Only one respondent gave a negative response, reporting that they found the Gathering Day they attended to be poorly facilitated.

Similarly to the Training Days, factors identified which might strengthen Gathering Days included more discussion time, attendance by all involved, and a clearer structure/agenda. Some respondents noted the timing of these events as somewhat problematic due to where they were in the programme; for example, one respondent noted that it would have been helpful to have more than one but because they were in the second phase this was not possible, while several commented on the need for these days to be more spaced out throughout the programme.

No differences emerged in the open responses given by respondents from schools and those from creative organisations. Likewise no differences emerged in the open responses between those who had attended both Training and Gathering Days, and those who had attended just one type of day.

5.4 The REFLECT Handbook

58% of respondents found the Handbook a quite or very useful guide to the co-mentoring process, with only 14% finding it not very useful and none finding it not at all useful. The section on 'Structuring your **REFLECT** co-mentor relationship' was mentioned most frequently as being the most useful section, with sections on the learning agreement, definitions of mentoring relationships, and organising and structuring meetings being most often cited within this. The '**REFLECT** co-mentoring - a framework' section was also mentioned as being useful, including the definition of an effective mentoring relationship and of reflective practice most often cited within this. For many respondents, the detail given in the Handbook was seen as beneficial; for example, one respondent felt the meetings structure section was the most helpful "as it gave clear steps to how we should frame our journey". For some, the Handbook helped fill in the blanks that arose due to missing the Training Day or provided a valuable structure for the programme.

Most respondents did not identify a 'least useful' part of the Handbook; of those that did, they did not identify the same sections as being unhelpful (areas that were mentioned included the background to The Sage Gateshead, the biographies of the team, the meeting map, the co-mentoring relationships section, and the bibliographies). Although general feedback about the

Handbook was very positive, four respondents thought it was lengthy and difficult to access because of the language used, with one respondent saying it was too 'airy-fairy' and one saying it was too 'wordy'. Some respondents had found it useful at the start but not referred to it much since, but most felt it was useful to have this level of detail for reference if required.

5.5 Impact of the programme

Average meetings with co-mentors were at around 6 weekly intervals, although this varied considerably: most respondents (31%) met every 2 months, and the next group (26%) met monthly. Only one respondent met every week with their co-mentor, and only 3 every 2 weeks. The average number of meetings to date was 3 (43%), with only 8 respondents having had 5 or more meetings.

Although most of the evaluations of the overall programme were positive, this section of the questionnaire generated less extreme responses than the other sections, with most respondents choosing the 'quite' effective option. While 62% of respondents felt that their initial expectations had been met by the programme, only 21% of these fell into the 'very much so' category. Similarly, 58% felt that the programme was quite or very effective in enabling them to achieve a co-mentoring focus, but only 17% of respondents felt this very much so. The majority of the remaining responses were in the neutral category, with very small numbers of negative responses (typically around 10-15% of respondents chose the 'not very' or 'not at all' options) for the effectiveness of the programme for the participants and their co-mentors. From the open-ended responses, it was apparent that a number of respondents felt the programme either had not finished yet in the short term or that it had longer-term potential, and so they found it hard to evaluate at this point in time. This is likely to be responsible for the large proportion of neutral responses in this section.

A range of positive recurring themes emerged in response to the open-ended questions on the major outcomes of the programme. Most respondents mentioned multiple positive benefits:

The programme is really benefiting me as an individual and the way I do my job: fresh ideas; networking-sharing ideas with others; new ways of working; empowering me in my role; practical experience 'hands on' activities-learning by doing; putting yourself in others' shoes (**Creative Practitioner**).

Respondents referred to the confidence they had gained from the programme, noting that it provided them with the opportunity to share and discuss ideas with those from different backgrounds. A strong theme that emerged from those working in creative organisations was that the programme provided them with insight into how schools operate and improved communication skills with teachers. Many of the teachers talked about the programme initiating a 'change' in the way they worked. They referred to incorporating more creativity in their lessons, increased reflection of their own and their school's own practice, their career progression and to continue to make contact with people from other organisations (rather than just working with those from the school). As noted earlier, several respondents thought that it was too early to report the major outcomes of the programme at this point.

Respondents also identified several unexpected outcomes or ways in which the programme had exceeded their expectations. Discussion and sharing ideas was a common unexpected outcome. Respondents had also not expected to make links with people from a range of different backgrounds and made positive comments about the opportunity provided to learn from others. For example, one creative practitioner highlighted:

Value of mentoring relationship with someone completely disconnected from my geographical area and therefore not part of any potential project or contractual relationship (**Creative Practitioner**).

A number of respondents working for creative organisations reported that they enjoyed working with teachers and learning about the school environment and how children learn. A few participants had made significant unexpected changes to their working lives: for example, one creative practitioner noted:

The programme has given me the opportunity to slow down and step back a little from my constantly hectic working life, allowing me to consider why I do what I do, and to re-examine my motivation for being involved in creative learning. Some of the reflective activities we participated in on the Gathering Days were immensely helpful (particularly 'What if...?') and one or two of these led to the realisation that I needed to make some urgent changes in my professional life. One of these changes involved re-negotiating my role within the voluntary organisation I work with (**Creative Practitioner**).

The most common activity engaged in as part of the co-mentoring process was visiting each other's place of work (with 49% of participants responding 'very much'), with some participants also engaging in a creative process with one another (40%) or visiting exhibitions (30%). Very few participants visited a performance (88% responding 'not at all'). Eighteen respondents provided an 'other' activity, and of these 72% said they had engaged in this as part of the co-mentoring process. Activities which were frequently engaged in included coaching conventions; engaging confidence building techniques; sessions in museums; and visiting another **REFLECT** member's school together.

Most respondents felt that the co-mentoring partnership had contributed to their own professional development (63%) and enhanced their creative and professional learning (69%), although fewer felt that the partnership had contributed to the development of their organisation (39%). Despite this relatively small proportion, open-ended responses suggest that the respondents consider that their organisations will benefit, indirectly, from their own personal and professional development. Those from creative organisations felt the programme had increased their confidence and provided them with skills to work in schools, including one instance of a creative practitioner who was going to start teaching a class. Those from schools also talked about self-confidence, becoming more creative in their teaching, and incorporating creativity in cross curricular projects. Respondents from both creative organisations and schools talked about the opportunities of working with people from different types of organisations (networking), and how they had learned to be more creative. Some respondents noted the direct benefits to their organisations: for example, for one respondent the programme had led

to “long overdue restructuring of our voluntary organisation, and formalising job descriptions for all volunteering roles”.

Similar themes emerged regarding the impact of the programme on the young people that respondents worked with. For example, the increased confidence of the respondent emerged as a theme, with respondents anticipating that their confidence would wear off on the young people they worked with. Both teachers and those from creative organisations talked about how the programme could enhance their teaching, in class and in workshops. Two participants, both from creative organisations, had increased their awareness of working with children with special educational needs and also those with disabilities, and used this awareness to tailor their projects accordingly. As one noted:

Improved creative practice as a result of regular habitual reflection on my part will hopefully lead to a richer, more fulfilling learning experience for the young people I work with. The young people I work with will also benefit from my increased knowledge about how children learn in different ways (after observing and discussing with my co-mentor who is a SEN specialist teacher) and from excellent new resources I have discovered as a direct result of the **REFLECT** process (**Creative Practitioner**).

One respondent indicated that the framework used in the co-mentoring process could be applied to pupils in the form of peer group mentoring. The school-organisation relationship also emerged as a theme in this question, with respondents explaining how the **REFLECT** process broke down barriers between schools and other organisations, and also helped those working outside of schools to appreciate the pressures of teaching. Respondents, particularly those in schools, indicated that creativity was now taking a more prominent position in lessons, and in cross-curricular projects, which in turn enhanced children’s interest and enjoyment in lessons. In summary, an overwhelming majority felt that the approach adopted by **REFLECT** could serve as a useful model for others to follow (76%).

5.6 Explaining outcomes

The relationships between certain key variables are next explored based on the above findings to attempt to identify features of the programme that contribute to its perceived effectiveness amongst participants.

As noted earlier, the effectiveness of the matching process seemed to colour respondents’ views of the programme overall. Significant correlations were found between the ratings given to the effectiveness of the matching process and all the evaluations of the impact of the programme (r between .355 and .646, $p < .05$). The more effective respondents find the matching process, the more positive they are about the impact of the programme in every way. This was the most significant of the statistical relationships found in the data.

Respondents’ ratings of how clear the initial aims, objectives and expectations were also correlated significantly with how they felt their expectations had been met by the programme (r between .46 and .594, $p < .001$) and less so but still significantly with how they felt the programme had contributed to their own professional development (r between .335 and .468, $p < .05$).

Respondents' impressions of the Training and Gathering Days also contributed significantly to the extent to which they felt their expectations were met ($r=.387$, $p<.05$ for training, $r=.49$, $p<.001$ for gathering). Those participants who rated the Training and Gathering Days as more effective also felt their expectations had been more successfully met by the programme. This relationship was much stronger for the Gathering Days, reflecting the open-ended comments about how this had acted like an extension of the co-mentoring relationship. The opportunities to share ideas and network at these events seem to lead to positive impressions of the programme overall and its likelihood of being effective in other contexts.

Finally, ratings of the usefulness of the Handbook did not have any significant relationship to any evaluations of the impact of the programme.

Comparison of responses from participants working in schools and in creative organisations was also undertaken to explore any differences in responses to the programme. There is no consistent pattern of responses from the statistics and none of the differences are statistically significant. As the number of respondents from each region was small, it was not possible to compare the experiences of participants from each region.

5.7 Summary

The questionnaire data overall give a positive impression of the impact of the **REFLECT** programme, which has been well received by both those working in schools and in creative organisations. The strongest relationship between factors found here 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. In general most participants found the entire process to be of considerable benefit, and it has produced some major shifts in thinking and in practice amongst some participants. Many view the co-mentoring relationship as one which will have long-term benefits as well as contributing to the effectiveness of working practices in the short term, and most have valued the experience of being part of the programme.

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. The Training and Gathering days have given considerable added value and many respondents also find the Handbook a valuable resource. From the sample analysed here it appears that the **REFLECT** programme has made a considerable and sustained impact on its participants' working lives; however some caution must be exercised, as the overall response rate was modest (just over one third of all those participating in the programme).

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