

An explorative, independent study, evaluating the University of South Wales’ mentoring programme identifying and presenting the impacts of mentoring to both individuals and organisations.

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# I would like to send my most sincere acknowledgements to Mel, Mostyn and David for providing me with the opportunity to review such a well-respected programme – I hope this report provides sufficient detail to support the future progression of the University’s initiative

# To all participants – thank you for your contributions throughout this study. I would like to wish you all the very best wish your future mentoring endeavors

# Executive Summary

This explorative study was commissioned by the University of South Wales (USW) to provide a greater insight into the effects of mentoring on an individual in both a personal and professional context, as well as, the impacts experienced by organisations as a result of their workforce receiving mentoring in a personal capacity. To ensure a comprehensive review was produced, 22 semi-structured interviews; 1 departmental review day and multiple case studies were utilised to support the collection of qualitative research. A statistical analysis technique known as ‘coding’ was adopted to support the formulation of emerging themes and trends.

Alongside the overarching aim, participant’s perceptions of mentoring were explored; however, throughout this investigation it became apparent that “mentoring” as a term is not widely understood. As a result, the emerging themes identified through participant’s responses were formulated into an overarching definition, providing the University’s mentoring programme with greater clarity.

When assessing the impacts of mentoring, three sub themes were identified: personal benefits; career related benefits and organisational benefits. The development of self-confidence was the most prominent impact associated to mentoring at USW. Through enhancing an individual’s level of self-confidence multiple personal, career and organisational benefits developed also. Alongside the development of an individual’s confidence mentoring at USW supported individual’s skill development with a strong association to leadership development emerging. Mentees also articulated mentoring as being beneficial in the development of skills, contributing to individual’s career progression. Additionally, mentees presented developments in their behavior as a result of their mentoring experience, articulating reductions in stress, developments in motivation and positivity with some presenting mentoring as being a life changing experience for themselves and those closest to them. Organisational leaders articulated an enhanced performance within their teams as well as a developed group culture and collaborative environment post mentoring.

In addition to reviewing participant’s perceptions, and the impacts of mentoring, the mentoring programme was reviewed with strengths, limitations and recommendations being identified. On the whole the mentoring programme delivered by the University received very positive reviews with the standard of lead mentors and the formulation of a Networking group being the pinnacle of programme delivery. However, limitations related to the engagement with ‘Thriving Clubs’ were frequent, as well as, concerns associated to confidentiality being identified also. Recommendations were provided through the feedback of the participants with many expressing greater opportunities to network and share best practice as desirable and beneficial to the standard of mentoring provided externally.

Overall, a considerable number of positive developments were identified by participants throughout this study supporting the success of the mentoring programme, however to ensure optimal success in the future the programme must be marketed and communicated effectively as well as ensuring ample support is apparent at each tier of delivery prior to expansion and diversification.

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# 1.0 Introduction

In 2013 the University of South Wales initiated their ‘mentoring programme’ providing opportunities for sixteen mentors to operate across the five regions of Gwent. The selected mentors from the five authorities undertook a programme of mentor training upskilling them to ensure optimal development within Gwent’s ‘Thriving Clubs’ scheme – a key focus of Sport Wales.

Since the commencement of the University’s programme, considerable developments have occurred including a significant number of mentors successfully completing the University’s programme; an increased number of clubs, organisations and individuals have benefitted from the opportunity to receive mentoring and a development in the number and diversity of lead mentors supporting the delivery of the University’s programme. Despite such substantial growth across three years the University’s programme remains very well respected across the sector leaving a positive reputation to maintain.

In late 2015 this evaluative study was proposed to an independent body with the aim to provide a greater insight into the outcomes of mentoring as well as the University’s delivery. This report hopes to provide greater clarity and assistance in the continued development of the University’s programme.

# 2.0 Research Aims

This evaluative study aimed to explore the University of South Wales’ (USW) mentoring programme, identifying the ‘Impacts of Mentoring’ and presenting them in a manner which can be utilised to effectively promote the initiative. The evidence sourced through the completion of this study may also be embedded within project reviews, highlighting return on investment; as well as being used to source additional funding to promote the sustainability of future delivery.

Alongside the overarching premise of this study, supplementary objectives were also apparent. These include:

1. To further understand stakeholder’s perceptions of mentoring, ensuring mentoring is clearly comprehended across the sector.
2. To review the University’s mentoring programme, sourcing detailed feedback from key participants, establishing strengths and areas for improvement.
3. To provide comprehensive recommendations supporting the future delivery of the University’s programme.

Furthermore, the information assembled throughout this analysis will be presented through the production of innovative resource, which in turn, is anticipated to encourage a more effective marketing style; enhancing clarity and stimulating uptake.

## 2.1 Research Themes

To ensure the required objectives (identified above) were successfully attained, each aim was considered and embedded as a focus point within the production of an interview schedule (appendix one). For greater clarity the below diagram highlights the key themes of each discussion.

# 3.0 Methodology

Throughout previous reviews, mentoring has often been quantitatively measured using statistical evidence to support the programme’s impact and return on investment. However, the commissionaires at the University of South Wales believe this limits the measurability of mentoring. In turn, this study adopts a qualitative study design where participant’s views and experiences have been collected and expressed.

The findings enclosed within this report have been sourced through the delivery of twenty-two semi structured interviews with individuals who are, or have been, engaged in the University’s mentoring programme as a mentor, mentee, or both. In addition, research was sourced through the collection of feedback at one authority’s review day whereby the mentoring programme was critically evaluated. Finally, feedback was collected through the analysis of case studies produced by mentors.

Post data-collection all primary and secondary data was analysed through an approach known as ‘coding’. Coding allows for information to be categorised into trends and themes allowing prominent findings to emerge. The key themes and trends established throughout the coding process have been implemented to form the foundation of this report, with participant’s quotations being used to support the validity of the paper’s findings.

To ensure all ethical considerations associated to qualitative research studies were adhered to all participant’s feedback has been anonymously presented throughout.

# 4.0 Understanding ‘Mentoring’ at the University of South Wales

In relation to the first supplementary objective highlighted in section 2 whereby understanding the perceptions of key stakeholders was required, a comprehensive review surrounding their interpretations of mentoring was completed. Additionally, through the evaluation of participant’s explanations, an encompassing ethos of the University’s programme became apparent. In turn, the promotion of the University’s ethos may supplement the recruitment of additional mentors in the future development of the initiative.

Through the collation of individual’s perceptions, it became apparent that although many articulated comprehensive responses, some individuals expressed confusion on their own behalf, and on behalf of the sector. Deeper exploration identified that the confusion of the sector stems from the differentiation and miscommunication of mentoring opportunities between bodies. This finding emphasises the demand for this study, as well as expressing the importance of clearly communicating the University’s offer to both new and existing consumers.

Despite confusion being conveyed, concise definitions were articulated by the majority. Through coding stakeholder’s perceptions, it became apparent that contributors possess individual perceptions of mentoring. Consequently, differentiations in perceptions may hinder the clarity of mentoring through ‘word of mouth’ marketing; therefore, emergent themes apparent within the majority of participant’s responses have been organised to formulate a centralised definition. However, prior to reviewing the centralised definition the most emergent themes have been discussed; these include:

1. Supporting and Guiding individuals
2. Providing direction
3. A trusting relationship

## 4.1 Supporting and Guiding Individuals

With the vast majority of participants articulating mentoring as a “supportive and guiding” process, this was the most prevalent theme. Additionally, both mentors and mentees of the University’s programme described mentoring as “supporting and guiding an individual ([mentee]) towards their personal targets”.

Through exploration it became apparent that mentees respect the tailored approach encompassed within the University’s offer. Mentees proceeded to positively review the level of ownership provided by the mentors throughout their experience; however, perceive the mentor as being instrumental in their progression. Mentors on the other hand, view the growth of a mentee as being the result of the mentees actions and engagement rather than the support they have provided.

Mentees also highlighted great satisfaction with the advice and guidance provided by their mentors. One individual stated: “mentors don’t provide you with all the answers but they guide and support you along your journey”. This enforces the support provided by the mentor as well as the ownership and accountability instilled throughout their delivery. This was positively supported through mentees responses whereby mentors were defined as facilitators rather than dictators.

Finally, one significant message collected throughout participant’s feedback relates to the substantial level of respect held by mentees to their mentors as a result of their support. This advocates the reputation and high quality instilled throughout the mentoring programme; a significant factor of the programme’s delivery.

## 4.2 Providing Direction and Clarity

The second overarching theme identified through coding relates to the progression of the mentee along their journey towards obtaining their personal aspirations or goals. Through analysis it was clear that mentoring supports the ability for one to identify their personal goals, targets and values as well as allowing them to recognise their true potential. This statement was articulated largely by mentors, however was reinforced by some mentees also.

“Mentoring is guiding an individual or an organisation towards their ultimate goal; however, when they get there they realise that there are plenty more opportunities to develop themselves or their organisation”

In review of participant’s feedback, the primary aim of mentoring at USW is to “develop an individual in line with their personal aspirations, goals or targets”. This definition emerged frequently through both mentor’s and mentee’s responses. In addition, as mentioned above, mentoring has provided mentees with the ability to identify their individual goals through discovering their personal values. By identifying a mentees personal goals, greater clarity and direction emerges, allowing tailored plans to be formulated in line with their personal objectives. Furthermore, by setting clear targets mentees articulated the ability to self-reflect upon their progression towards their destination. In turn, this supports the impacts of mentoring beyond formal one-to-one discussions.

Mentoring was also associated to mentees to becoming more self-aware; understanding their passions, strengths, weaknesses and emotions. By becoming more self-aware and having greater clarity over their personal vision, mentees saw beyond perceived expectations. Additionally, this was supported by enhancing an individual’s confidence. Mentees articulated that through acknowledging their true potential, greater intrinsic motivation and drive supporting their personal. Many individuals also identified a desire to continuously progress as a result of their mentoring. Finally, mentors frequently reinforced their role as being to ensure individuals progress and achieve their absolute best.

“Mentoring is all about finding an individual’s potential and supporting them to achieve it”

## 4.3 The Importance of Building Relationships

Less apparent than previous themes but one which is integral to the progression and success of mentoring relates to the relationship formed between the mentor and the mentee. Many of the University’s trained mentors emphasised the importance of “forming a trusting relationship” where the individual feels comfortable as being pivotal to the development of the mentee. To reinforce the importance of forming strong relationships, through examination, a positive correlation between mentee’s satisfaction and the strength of the mentor/mentee relationship was identified.

As a result of this finding it is imperative that positive relationships are formed by the University’s mentoring to allow optimal development of the mentee.

“Mentoring is about forming relationships… if you can build strong relationships, everything else happens naturally”

To further reiterate the importance of forming positive working relationships, numerous mentees described mentoring as an opportunity to express their feelings and emotions in a controlled environment. Many mentees value this opportunity and stated that post-mentoring they feel more relaxed, positive, motivated and open minded. To ensure this opportunity remains available trusting, confidential and comforting relationships must be apparent.

Overall, the success of the University’s mentoring programme is ultimately built around the ability for mentors to form empathetic relationships where individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings. This promotes optimal development.

## 4.4 Defining Mentoring at the University of South Wales

As highlighted previously, due to the miscommunication and contrasting delivery models mentoring as a term has resulted in confusion throughout the sector. In turn, the lack of clarity provided by bodies coordinating mentoring programmes could be detrimental to the initiatives success. Therefore, ensuring the University of South Wales’ mentoring programme is clearly communicated is integral to the programmes expansion and development.

To ensure the University’s programme is clearly communicated a central definition has been formulated through the amalgamation of emergent themes apparent within participant’s feedback. Through embedding the feedback of key stakeholders, the definition offers greater validity as a result of first-hand experience. In addition, the centralised definition promotes a bottom-up approach where members of the University’s network are valued and listened to; promoting a collaborative approach to developing the programme.

### So, what is mentoring at the University of South Wales?

“Mentoring at the University of South Wales *is supporting and guiding an individual, or organisation, to reach their optimal potential; allowing them to see beyond their perceptions and thrive towards personal, or organisational, targets.”*

# 5.0 Assessing the Impacts of Mentoring

Within this section the overarching premise of this study will be evaluated. Participants were asked to articulate their experiences through three categories ensuring sufficient information was collected to support the validity of this study. All participants were required to provide details which they have experienced from both a personal and career perspective. Contributors in positions on management/ leadership were asked to progress and describe the benefits of mentoring on their organisation/ department.

This section has been split into three subsections to ensure each theme is clearly evidenced, supporting the programme’s return on investment. The three sub-sections include:

1. Personal benefits
2. Work/ Career specific benefits
3. Organisational benefits

## 5.1 Personal benefits of mentoring

### 5.1.1 Developing Confidence

Nearly all participants interviewed; case studies reviewed; and messages collected during the department review session highlighted a considerable development to their self-confidence, as a result of their engagement with mentoring. This change in psychology occurred within members who initially perceived themselves as having low self-esteem, as well as those who perceived themselves to be confident characters. This highlights the considerable impact mentoring can have on participants. Articulating a development in their confidence also expressed greater motivation to progress and develop both inside and outside of work. In addition, the development of an individual’s self-confidence underpins many of the additional benefits experienced by the mentee.

Alongside developing participant’s self-confidence their personal development promoted progression in areas such as perceived self-worth, where individual mentors expressed statements such as “I feel comfortable in my own skin”; “I used to overlook the importance of me; however now, I am always looking to support myself and grow”. As a result of the positive impacts on individual’s self-worth, participants expressed greater feelings of positivity; open-mindedness and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, many of those who expressed enhanced self-confidence reported to feel comfortable trying new things and stepping out of their comfort zone. One individual stated the following “Mentoring boosted my self-confidence massively; now I feel more confident in new situations and stepping out of my comfort zone – I am now always looking to take on another challenge”.

### 5.1.2 Behavioural Change

In development from enhanced self-confidence, participants also expressed positive behavioural changes, such as: increased motivation to progress towards their personal ambitions; enhanced positivity as a result of reduced stress, anxiousness and uncertainty; greater open-mindedness and clarity of direction; as well as additional control over their emotions.

Individuals articulated greater motivation to achieve their personal ambitions as a result of their increased feeling of self-worth. Additionally, participants articulated greater investments into their personal development immediately after receiving their mentoring. One individual expressed greater content and happiness in his family life after focusing on his personal views and desires. The same individual stated “without mentoring I would not have identified the need to invest in myself and I wouldn’t have become as family orientated as I have”.

In addition to raising individual’s motivations and desires to succeed, mentoring provides clarity of mentee’s personal ambitions allowing individuals to flourish towards their full potential; promoting positivity as a by-product of achievement and success.

Participants also presented a reduction in stress as a result of mentoring, leading to additional benefits such as enhanced positivity and open-mindedness. One individual articulated:

“My confidence has changed massively – I am much less stressed, I’m more calm and I am definitely happier; both inside and outside of work”.

Another reinforced this, stating:

“Mentoring gave me someone to talk to. It helped me personally. It allowed me to clear some clutter in my mind and stopped me from taking my stress to work. I feel so much more relaxed and positive as a result of my mentoring”.

Mentoring has also been associated to the promotion of individual’s overall positivity, with individuals highlighting feelings of greater happiness as a result of their engagement. Participants expressed these developments as being widely recognised and complimented by their peers, colleagues or leaders. The following statement expressed by a mentee reflect the positive impacts mentoring can have on one’s overall positivity.

“People have mentioned that I have become more positive … I guess I do feel happier, much happier actually”.

### 5.1.3 Life Changing

Despite numerous additional benefits associated to mentoring being articulated above, the following statements emphasise the developments and impact mentoring can have on an individual’s life when delivered effectively and when supported fully by both the mentor and the mentee.

Life changing - a term articulated by few but a term promoting the power of mentoring. Mentoring has allowed individuals to look at life in a different perspective; become more aware to opportunities and challenges; develop as an individually; become a better spouse, parent and individual. Mentoring has allowed individuals to balance their lives, take greater control of their futures, build relationships and become content in the life they lead.

The following quotes have been presented to express the powerful impacts mentoring at the University of South Wales has had on the lives of individuals, including both mentors and mentees.

“Mentoring has been life changing”; “I think mentoring can honestly change your life”;

“Mentoring changed our lives”. “Mentoring has 100% made such a difference to my life so far”

“If it wasn’t for mentoring I wouldn’t be in the position I am in; I wouldn’t have had the opportunities I have had; I wouldn’t be around the people I need to be around. Mentoring has been life changing for me. “

“Mentoring has definitely made me a better person; better husband and better dad.”

“Mentoring gave me an opportunity. Without the opportunities provided throughout my mentoring, my life wouldn’t have changed”.

“Mentoring gave me a chance to change. It allowed me to look at things totally differently. I think mentoring can honestly change your life.”

“Mentoring developed me as a person. Developing myself as a person allowed me to develop every other part of my life. I am able to control my work-life balance. My wife has said I’m a different person; I’m at home and present – I can leave work, at work. I have a much greater family focus now.”

“My whole demeanour has changed… I think mentoring has changed me hugely”

“I am in a much better place now than I was two years ago; now I can’t put that all down to mentoring but it has definitely played a key part.”

In summary, the mentoring programme delivered by the University of South Wales and their mentors has resulted in some considerable impacts to the lives of individuals and those closest to them.

## 5.2 Work and Career Specific Impacts Experienced by Individuals

Alongside the numerous personal benefits, individuals expressed additional benefits to themselves in a professional context. Moreover, in continuation from section 4.1 where mentoring was articulated as a process of supporting and guiding individuals towards their personal ambitions, all participants communicated benefits to their career as a result of mentoring.

In continuation from the most prevalent impact of mentoring, the development of an individual’s confidence, mentees expressed enhanced self-confidence as beneficial to supporting them in feeling comfortable and confident within their role. This statement was more apparent within the responses of individuals new to a role, regardless of their prior experience. One individual articulated the following statement to support this finding with a multiple others expressing similar responses.

“I understand myself now in the role I am in and the level I work at. I have a better understanding of where I fit within the organisation.”

### 5.2.1 The Impact of Developed Self-Confidence

Mentees articulated that as a result of their enhanced confidence they feel more comfortable portraying their skills, abilities, and personalities, and thoughts within their post. One individual expressed a significant development to her confidence allowing her to feel confident in communicating her views whilst challenging others on theirs if required. Prior to mentoring this individual stated she would not express her voice throughout any meetings. The same individual progressed to provide the following account to support her personal development within her role.

“Previous issues within work had really affected my confidence but working with my mentor has allowed me to voice my opinion and share my views whereas before I wouldn’t have said anything. Now I am much more confident in challenging and presenting my difference in opinion”

### 5.2.2 Skill Development

Mentoring was also articulated to have a positive association to an individual’s skill development. Many participants provided examples of their skill development as a result of their personal mentoring experience. Mentees of the University’s programme highlighted improvements to skills such as:

* Organisation & Planning
* Communication
* Time Management
* Reflection

“I have completed a number of courses and training workshops throughout my career but mentoring is by far the best source of CPD I have ever come across – if you want to develop and grow as an individual, get yourself a mentor”

One individual clearly articulated a development to his organisation and planning skills as a result of his mentoring experience. Although the participant did not perceive himself as being unorganised or having poor planning skills he was made aware that he could become more productive by implementing simple strategies into his schedule. This point was raised by his mentor to support and overcome the challenge faced by the individual with regards to his ability to his demanding workload. Through implementing simple strategies, the mentee promoted a greater sense of control over his workload, reducing his levels of stress and allowing him greater capacity to complete tasks which were not previously prioritised. In addition, the mentee stated greater ability to balance his work and personal commitments through being more productive. Overall, the individual articulated greater levels of satisfaction within his role through being more organised and taking a planning approach to tasks.

“My organisation skills have developed hugely throughout my mentoring, allowing me to plan for the future and think further ahead.”

Moreover, both mentors and mentees expressed developments to their communication skills as a result of increased levels of self-confidence. Many individuals highlighted their previous anxiety when presenting to an audience; however, through increasing their confidence individuals feel more comfortable delivering workshops and presentations. Additionally, trained mentors articulated benefits to their communication skills as a result of the ‘Emotional Intelligence’ support provided throughout the mentors training scheme. Through being more emotionally intelligent, participants shared greater ability to communicate messages effectively. This was largely valued by individuals in positions of leadership.

“Mentoring helped be shape how I express my passions and beliefs more positively”

“After receiving mentoring I often say things to myself to see how they sound and to make sure the message comes across the way I want it to”

The most common skill developed as a result of mentoring, as expressed by all participants, was self-reflection, with participants all supporting its importance in their personal development. Reflection allows individuals to “take a step back and look at the bigger picture”. This approach allows individuals to learn and develop from previous experiences by reviewing the positives and negatives of scenarios, before implementing an action plan to overcome the challenges faced. Reflection is also utilised to identify individual’s personal aspiration as they are encouraged to reflect upon their strengths, weaknesses, motivates and passions. Both mentors and mentees advocate the importance of reflection within day-to-day operations as this tool was commonly used to manage individual’s emotions and to prevent irrational behaviours. In addition, through greater understanding of reflection contributors expressed the ability to acknowledge the needs of others supporting emotional intelligence. Mentoring has been positively associated to all individual’s ability to self-reflect with many completing the skill autonomously as a result of their experience of mentoring. Below, participant’s statements have been presented expressing the positive impacts reflective practice has had on their personal growth and development.

“I really began to reflect regularly after receiving my mentoring; now it is autonomous”

“Through learning to self-reflect I am now able to self-mentor, allowing me to develop continuously”

“Reflection allowed me to see the bigger picture. I became more self-aware and was able to prioritise effectively through reflection”

“Mentoring gave me that ‘me time’ to think about myself and my goals and how I can move towards my goals. I wouldn’t have reflected on my journey if it wasn’t for mentoring”

In addition to individuals developing their personal skills and qualities through mentoring, the mentoring process also supported individuals in achieving greater qualifications, supporting their personal development. One mentee highlighted the impact mentoring had on his ability to complete his ILM qualification, therefore, supporting his personal and skill development through the completion of accredited awards.

“I honestly would not have made it through my ILM qualification without my mentor – he helped me massively”

### 5.2.3 Leadership Development

All participants in positions of leadership expressed a development in their ability to lead an organisation effectively. As discussed previously throughout the University’s mentor training programme, individuals were exposed to the importance of emotional intelligence and were able to develop the skill throughout the delivery style of the workshops. As a result, participants in positions of leadership were able to identify the importance of understanding their workforces’ motivations. One individual, new to a position of leadership, implemented mechanisms to support his emotional intelligence and to motivate the workforce to ensure that collectively the organisation’s overarching objectives were achieved. In addition, emotional intelligence has been identified as integral to successful leadership by many experts; therefore, by implementing these themes into the mentors training schedule there is a greater probability of successful leadership being developed across sport. A significant priority of Sport Wales currently.

“After my experience of mentoring and understanding the importance of emotional intelligence I held one-to-one sessions with all members of my staff to ensure I knew what made them tick”

Another example of leadership development, as a result of mentoring and reflective practice, relates to the ability for one to identify and review their style of leadership. One individual became aware of their leadership style highlighting opportunities to adjust his style to promote greater effectiveness. Through the individual’s mentoring experience his mentor provided him with ample support to implement changes to his leadership approach as well as encouraging reflection throughout. As a result, the mentee adopted a more democratic leadership style, promoting greater autonomy within the organisation.

“I became more democratic, more relaxed and less rigid in my leadership approach providing colleagues with ownership over their tasks”

Through greater self-confidence and the support of individual’s mentors, leaders identified clear progressions to their abilities to manage conflict and overcome challenging scenarios. Leaders stated that through having the opportunity to share their experience/challenge with their mentor was “invaluable” as the opportunity to reflect upon the potential outcomes through effective questioning allowed them to solve the problems independently. This supports a previous theme whereby mentors offer support but do not provide the answers. Mentoring was positively associated to the development of leader’s ability to manage conflict, with all leaders articulating greater comfort managing conflict post-mentoring. One individual described the support she received from her mentor as being “instrumental” to her current success. Managing conflict is a frequent task with this individual’s role and through her development as a result of mentoring she feels comfortable acting accordingly to produce the right outcomes for the organisation.

“My mentor assisted me in feeling confident in managing conflict – something integral to my success within my role”

Enhancing leader’s self-confidence and ability to autonomously reflect, many leaders expressed greater comfort in making decisions on behalf of their organisation. In addition, through being emotionally intelligent and aware of the impacts actions may have on their colleague’s, leaders highlighted mentoring as being essential for the success of decision making at a strategic level as there is an opportunity to express their thoughts before being challenged or advised by their mentor. In addition, through being more emotionally intelligent, leaders were able to consider the needs of his workforce, ensuring the decision best for the organisation was made.

“Mentoring gave me the confidence to make decisions in my home life which benefitted me and allowed me to make decisions on behalf of… for the best of the organisation”

### 5.2.4 Career progression

From discussions with both mentors and mentees it became apparent that mentoring plays a considerable part in an individual’s career progression. Participants highlighted a greater motivation to progress and seek new opportunities as a result of their enhanced clarity of personal ambitions. However, alongside promoting an individual’s motivation to progression, mentoring has been positively associated to supporting mentees in obtaining promotions or new appointments in line with their development plans. Some examples of successful career progression as a result of mentoring include:

1. Individuals obtaining positions of leadership
2. Mentees/ mentors possessing the qualities and skills to change organisations and excel
3. Participants gaining greater responsibility within their role
4. Mentors completing independent mentoring outside of their USW with some setting up their own businesses to support progression and expansion
5. Individuals to set up their own businesses

Numerous individuals who have, or are, engaged in the University’s programme have complimented their mentoring experiences in their progression. Many stated “I wouldn’t be in the position I am without the support of mentoring”; emphasising the impact mentoring can have on an individual’s progression in line with their personal aspirations.

“I would not be sat here now if it wasn’t for my mentor – I have no doubt”

“Without … I wouldn’t be sat here in my current role; I wouldn’t be in sport – I’d be gone”

“Mentoring is absolutely perfect for people seeking promotions”

Through the delivery of the University’s mentoring programme individuals have established a clear passion for supporting individuals through the profession of mentoring resulting in experienced mentors completing additional mentoring outside of the University’s offer. One individual stated the following quote in regards to the creation of his business as well as the change in his desired career path.

“…I developed a passion for it; I have taken on mentoring outside of work and coaching and do it personally now”

However, despite mentoring promoting the progression of many, participants within this study expressed mentoring to have halted their initial desires to change roles or organisations. Mentors have been involved in supporting their mentees through reviewing job descriptions, challenging the mentee to reflect on the opportunity more deeply. A number of individuals stated that without the support of their mentor they would not have considered the implications of their actions and therefore, would not be in the right role for them and their personal values. This emphasises the strength of the mentee-mentor relationships at the University of South Wales, where the mentors have the interests of their mentee at heart.

“I sat down with my mentor and shown him the JD [Job Description]; then he challenged me on a few points, this allowed me to see the holes in the role and realise it wasn’t for me”

“being questioned on my reasons for applying for a new role made me reflect on the decision – I then realised, my heart wasn’t in it and that the move wasn’t right for me”

## 5.3 Organisational Benefits

Alongside supporting the progression of individuals, the mentoring programme delivered by the University of South Wales also supports the development of organisations. Organisations largely benefit from mentoring as a result of their workforce obtaining and implementing the personal benefits developed throughout their mentoring experience.

This section has been divided into three categories, these include:

1. Boosting Team Dynamics
2. Enhancing Organisations Performance
3. Encouraging Peer Mentoring

### 5.3.1 Boosting Team Dynamics

Through exploration, mentoring has evidenced considerable benefits to the working environment of organisational departments with leaders expressing greater collaboration between staff, as a result of their personal mentoring experience. In addition, organisational leaders articulated an advancement in collaboration between staff, resulting in increased productivity and effectiveness through the completion of tasks.

“Members of our workforce are more willing to share ideas and support one another”

Moreover, alongside enhancing greater collaboration, mentoring at the University of South Wales has allowed individuals from within a workforce to develop professional, respectful and positive relationships. Colleagues of individuals have expressed a more positive working environment with less animosity as a result of mentoring. The development of relationships was positively viewed by multiple co-workers with one individual stating considerable developments to the whole workforce, not just the two mentees.

These amendments in group dynamics were referenced by participants within positions of leadership who have experienced significant developments to their workforce as a result of the change in culture between staff.

“There was one individual in our team I didn’t necessarily see eye to eye with prior to mentoring; however, after mentoring we have developed a stronger professional relationship”

### 5.3.2 Enhancing Organisation’s Performance

In development from enhancing collaboration throughout a workforce, mentoring has also been identified to improve the organisation’s, and mentee’s, performance in line with their targets. As mentioned previously the collation of a more enhanced workforce has demonstrated an overall organisational progression.

Leaders stated improvements to their workforce as a result of individuals identifying, and overcoming personal weaknesses. This boosts individual’s performance as well as their contribution towards organisational targets. Additionally, colleagues of individuals who have received mentoring through the University’s programme articulated positive developments, which in turn have produced in more effective behaviours in work. Colleagues also identified a greater motivation within their peers, boosting the enthusiasm of the workforce. In turn, departmental leaders stated the raised motivation levels of mentees is essential for their engagement with clubs, with many clubs providing greater satisfaction and positive feedback as a result of individuals behavioural changes. Moreover, alongside developing individual’s skills and qualities, mentoring has also provided opportunities for individuals to engage in external training opportunities. This produces a more skilled workforce which would be expected to support the development and enhancement of the organisation’s success.

Participants also expressed more specific developments to the sporting sector. One contributor articulated that as a result of receiving he has been more motivated, driven and productive; benefitting local sports clubs as more volunteers have been recruited alongside additional provision. Additionally, mentees working within the sport sector has expressed developments to their clubs after receiving mentoring with one individual presenting:

“Clubs value the importance of setting targets and want to surpass theirs as a result of mentoring”

This statement emphasises the initial aim of the mentoring programme where mentoring was implemented to support the development of Gwent’s ‘Thriving Clubs’ initiative.

### 5.3.3 Encouraging Peer Mentoring

Another significant organisational benefit, resulting from the University of South Wales’ mentoring opportunity relates to the increased awareness and development of staff with regards to mentoring. Leaders of multiple departments and teams identified greater elements of peer mentoring, whereby individuals who have completed the mentoring training have supported those who have not. In turn, one leader stated that as a result of individuals sharing their positive experiences with additional members of staff, a competitiveness was instilled throughout the team with multiple individuals expressing their interest towards the programme based upon the developments of their colleagues. The University’s programme has also grown due to a positive reputation being formed through ‘word of mouth’ marketing increasing the recruitment of mentors.

“Mentoring created competitiveness in the … team some people wanted to follow others, and others didn’t want to be left behind – that’s where mentoring grows.”

The University of South Wales’ mentoring programme has attracted significant engagement from individuals within leadership positions and therefore has resulted in enhanced leadership across organisations, as discussed previously. Many leaders supporting this study expressed the implementation of mentoring tasks and resources into their team meeting delivery. Additionally, through advocating the importance of mentoring, one individual has begun to schedule team meetings purely to focus on the development of his workforce sharing tools which supported him throughout his personal experiences. Similarly, individuals who have engaged in the mentoring may share new resources, techniques or skills within local sports clubs enhancing their delivery approach.

“Leaders are more able to embed mentoring into the team, promoting personal development”

“I have already instilled some of the elements covered in our mentoring to the team – I have another session and task to complete with them next week actually”

Through following this approach, the impacts and personal benefits developed as a result of mentoring are being passed onto a wider audience. Therefore, the results associated to organisational development and enhanced performance stem much wider than their immediate workforce.

“Mentors pass on their skills and experiences to our local clubs who then pass them onto their participants and volunteers supporting the development of the whole club”

Overall, mentoring has had a positive impact on organisations, with leaders expressing the following quotations in support of their colleagues and departments as a result of the initiative being delivered.

“The impacts of mentoring have had a great impact on our organisation”

“Mentoring has had a great impact on the whole team”

“Mentoring has created a happier, more motivated and more productive workforce”

# 6.0 Reviewing the University of South Wales’ Mentoring Programme

Throughout the final section of this report the University’s mentoring programme has been reviewed. Participants were asked to share their feedback in relation to the following themes:

1. The strengths of the University’s programme
2. The limitations associated to the University’s programme
3. Recommendations to support future delivery

Please note the review provided has been consolidated to present only the most dominant themes and therefore should not be viewed as an exhaustive analysis.

## 6.1 Strengths

### 6.1.1High Quality Mentors

The most prominent strength highlighted by participants associated to the individuals leading the delivery and coordination of the University’s programme. Feedback supported the diversity of mentors, all of whom hold extensive amounts of knowledge and experience in mentoring. The positive image, energy and passion portrayed by all lead mentors has been embedded throughout the programme gaining greater credibility and respect. Less experienced new mentors articulated significant developments to their mentoring capabilities as a result of the support provided by the programme leads. Additionally, the level of support provided throughout a mentee/mentor’s journey has also been positively reinforced with individuals valuing the opportunity to seek support from their mentors outside of their organised contact time. Participants positively articulated the wealth of experience held by the programme’s lead mentors as being integral to the development and success of the programme. In addition, the lead mentor’s professionalism and ethos has been recognised by participants to support a positive reputation across the sector; supporting the growth and development of the programme in the future.

### 6.1.2 Content and Delivery

Alongside the high standard of personnel associated to the University’s programme the content and delivery style of the mentor training process was positively articulated by the majority. Many participants praised the content of the workshops stating that all topics were applicable and have been beneficial throughout their mentoring experience. Additionally, numerous mentors have supported the selection of the context, expressing positive implications within their line of work. Contributors also supported the implementation of resources, providing mentors with a pool of information to refer back to throughout their delivery. Mentors enjoyed the learning process with the more experienced mentors articulating a positive shift in delivery through more practical tasks and engagement from the learners. Furthermore, the use of multiple delivers supported individual’s interaction and provided support for all learners.

“The content for me was perfect – I think they have the programme spot on”

### 6.1.3 Networking Group

Another prevalent strength highlighted by many was associated to the ‘Networking Group’ established by the University. The Networking Group offers individuals with significant potential with the support and opportunity to develop and progress. Many positive responses related to the opportunity for mentors to support and learn from one another; as instilled in the Networking Group. Individuals valued the support network provided, as well as the ability to share thoughts, experiences and resources. Additionally, delivering individual presentations to one another was positively reinforced with many participants emphasising the importance of this element in future cohorts. Finally, the ethos of the Networking Group was also mentioned multiple times with many referring to it as a “Family”; this reinforces the supportive group culture instilled throughout the programme. This may be used as a mechanism of attracting new mentors from different organisations.

“It is great to be able to take ideas and develop from others – all of the mentors in the networking group are so supportive”

### 6.1.4 USW’s Reputation

As the mentoring programme is hosted by the University of South Wales, a “highly valued organisation with a credible reputation”, a professional and formal image is produced. In turn, this has been identified to support the attraction of new customers from outside of the sport sector and outside of the Gwent region. Participants currently active within the programme expressed great value in the offer being delivered by the University with one individual stating: “the USW brand provides great credibility, attractive to new customers or partners”.

### 6.1.5 Accreditation

Numerous trained and qualified mentors emphasised the importance of providing a formal accreditation throughout the delivery of the mentoring programme as this supports the development of individual’s CDP, as well as providing individuals with the opportunity to develop their mentoring beyond the University’s programme. Participants also articulated that the accreditation should be more apparent in the promotion of the University’s programme to enhance interest and custom.

“Achieving the accreditation was very attractive – and great to obtain”

### 6.1.6 Spectrum

Spectrum was positively articulated by all who attended the duration of the workshops. Many mentors expressed benefits to their standard of delivery, pool of resource and the impacts experienced by mentees as a result of delivery. The continuation of Spectrum has been highly recommended by all attendees and therefore should be supported in the future. Participant’s expressed a more sustainable ‘mentoring pathway’ as a result of Spectrum; producing more high quality mentors. This increases the breadth of support higher up the ‘mentoring pyramid’ allowing greater opportunities to support future expansion.

“Spectrum – it was just next level! Absolutely incredible experience. Life Changing”

## 6.2 Limitations

### 6.2.1 Thriving Clubs

In 2013 when the University’s mentoring programme initiated, the rationale behind its delivery was to support the ‘Thriving Clubs’ initiative across Gwent. Since then, the foundation has remained to support these clubs however, more personal and individual mentoring has arisen. Through exploration it became apparent that the ‘Thriving Clubs’ may not be the most appropriate method of delivery for the University’s mentoring programme. Participant’s referenced the ‘Thriving Clubs’ rationale, highlighting their stability in comparison to other clubs across Gwent. One individual stated that clubs termed ‘Thriving Clubs’ receive ample support from their local Sports Development Officers alongside their mentoring; in turn, implying these clubs receive more support than required. In addition, mentors highlighted a clear misconception of the purpose of mentoring; therefore, resulting in greater confusion between Sports Development Officers and mentors. One Sports Development Officer shared her thoughts on the mentoring and clearly articulated that “mentoring really isn’t understood by our clubs, I think they will always come to us because we give them more frequent support”. Furthermore, mentors established conflict as a result of many mentors being Sports Development Officers. One mentor stated “I don’t think all clubs see us as mentors, some of the clubs I have engaged with have just seen me as another Sports Development Officer – I think that is why there is so much confusion”. Overall, despite some very positive results emerging from the successful work between mentors and ‘Thriving Clubs’ many did not support this to be the most effective method of delivery.

Recommendation: Mentors articulated a greater return on investment when supporting individuals, with organisations also benefiting from the mentoring of their workforce. Based upon the feedback not supporting the delivery of ‘Thriving Clubs’ and the representation of countless personal benefits stemming from mentoring individuals, it would be recommended that the University aim to support the development of individuals and organisations over ‘Thriving Clubs’. However, to progress the ‘Thriving Clubs’ offer greater clarity must be provided to the Sports Development Officer and the club. Initial meetings may be completed with all three parties present to clear outline the premise of the delivery; in turn preventing miscommunication and misunderstanding and promoting potential developments to the club’s engagement.

### 6.2.2 Confidentiality

Although no participant’s expressed first-hand experience of their confidentiality being breached a number of individuals voiced the concerns of their colleagues. Individuals shared stories surrounding the post-session reports, highlighting inconsistencies and incorrect accounts. Additionally, it became apparent that similarities between mentees reports were being made, especially between mentees from the same organisation. This left mentees concerned that others may have been exposed to their personal discussions as a result of similarities in reports. In some circumstances mentees disengaged due to a lack of trust towards their mentor.

“I haven’t experienced it but I have heard some people have had information shared about their sessions – I would be mighty frustrated if that was my discussions being shared”

Recommendation: Ensure a tight confidentiality processes is followed by all mentors. Ensure mentees are aware of the procedure for reporting concerns to support the identification of issues. Additionally, random report checks may be completed to assess the personalisation of discussions.

### 6.2.3 Relationships with Sports Development Officers

Despite a key objective of the University’s mentoring programme surrounding the and development of a ‘Thriving Club’. Mentoring was proposed to develop a strong relationship between the local Sports Development Officer and ‘Thriving Club’; however, participants expressed an opposing effect with confusion hindering the development of clubs. Confusion has emerged as a result of clubs and local sport development officers not understanding the role of the mentor or their involvement in a triangular process. Overall, clubs and SDOs are confused with regards to their roles and expectation of mentoring resulting in limited support or engagement.

“There is a clear lack of relationship and communication between the mentor, the Development Officer and the club leading to overall confusion”

Recommendation: Educate the three parties in the proposed impacts of mentoring as well as articulating the roles of each body in the progression of a ‘Thriving Club’.

### 6.2.4 Mentor Deployment

Mentors from one authority felt extremely demotivated due to their lack of deployment post completion of their initial training. In addition, negative feelings were expressed as a result of inconsistencies between authorities with regards to the opportunity for mentors to receive financial gain for their mentoring outside of the programme. Moreover, some participants evidenced a prolonged duration for mentor deployment. This resulted in individuals feeling less confident in their ability to provide high quality support to a mentee.

“One thing I think let the University programme down was the time it took for us to put into clubs “

Recommendation: Ensure sufficient deployment opportunities are available in provisional clubs or organisations prior to the delivery of mentor training. Ensure a set of clubs have been identified in case of contingency.

### 6.2.5 Regional Mentoring

Although regional mentoring has been successful across some authorities, others have expressed concerns regarding one neutral mentor facilitating the role of a mentor to numerous individuals of the same workforce. Participants shared feelings of reduced trust and engagement as through discussions with their colleagues it appeared a similar delivery style and content was being embedded across the board; in turn, reducing the individualisation and tailored approach of each mentoring session. In addition, this lead to similarities in post-mentoring reviews which caused additional feelings of mistrust.

“There was a lot of similarity in the content being delivered to members of our team. It seems odd that we are all at the exact same stage of our career and want to progress in a similar way”

Recommendation: Establish a clear process for mentees to express an interest in changing their mentor. Encourage individuals (mentees) to limit their communication surrounding the content of their mentoring to prevent misconceptions being formed.

## 6.3 Recommendations

### 6.3.1 Resource Portal

On the back of positive references associated to the information and resource shared throughout the programme, mentors have requested for a central storage point (Portal) to be produced. In addition to storing the University’s resource, mentors would be encouraged to share any documents they have found beneficial, enhancing the variety and quantity of information accessible to all. Furthermore, a database of all mentors contact details has been requested alongside a document sharing the mentoring experiences of each mentor. In turn, this may allow individuals to approach one another for advice and guidance.

### 6.3.2 Internal Networking Events

Mentors requested greater opportunities to share best practice and collaborate with their peers. An unstructured approach could be encompassed into this opportunity may emerge through hiring a room at the University, allowing mentors to attend and network with their peers. Through gathering mentors from different tiers, individuals may be able to support one another through sharing their experiences; what works well; and what to avoid. In addition, the programme leads may wish to use this opportunity to collect feedback to support the development of the programme; allowing challenges to be overcome efficiently.

### 6.3.3 External Network Events

In an attempt to raise the profile of USW’s mentoring programme and to provide organisations with a clear understanding of the offer, hosting a network evening would be beneficial. Through this delivery USW are able to clearly market their programme, as well as utilising their current mentors to share their experiences and stories. This will provide sufficient details into the impacts of mentoring, justifying the reasons for their engagement. In addition, hosting a one off evening where organisations and potential customers are gathered at one site promotes a resource and cost effective method of marketing and promotion.

### 6.3.4 Team / Department Meetings

Individuals who had experienced a mentor led department review session or team meeting expressed both departmental and organisational benefits; therefore, requests for additional opportunities for group mentoring sessions to be delivered. Additionally, other authorities also expressed their interest on the back of positive feedback from their peers.

### 6.3.5 Mentor Selection

Introducing the previous application and interview process has been supported by existing mentors who raised concerns mentor recruitment. Their concerns were supported, as many feel individuals were being forced to undertake the mentoring training as a result of the positive developments of others. This does not adhere to optional engagement and may in turn result in a reduced quality of trained mentors; resulting in a damaged image for the University’s programme.

### 6.3.6 Expansion

Despite current mentors supporting the progression and expansion of the University’s mentoring programme, individuals raised concerns around the maintenance of the programme’s reputation across the sector as a result of project growth. Participants encouraged the University to develop the programme at a controlled rate allowing the breadth of mentors throughout all tiers of the pyramid to supplement future progression. “Quality over Quantity” was a term frequently used throughout conversations.

### 6.3.7 Diversification

Expanding the University’s mentoring programme outside of the sport sector was a recommendation supported by many. Individuals expressed a greater ability to support the deployment of neutral mentors as a result of this development; therefore, promoting confidentiality, openness and honesty throughout mentoring experiences. These factors, as mentioned before result in greater developments to the mentee. Furthermore, by diversifying the network of mentors, greater perspectives and experiences become available, benefiting both the progression of the programme and mentees.

### 6.3.8 Flexible Delivery

Individuals who have engaged and completed the University’s mentoring training expressed difficulties in attending the sessions due to their commitments to other sports clubs. Recommendations encouraged an alternate delivery pattern to be implemented with sessions taking place on a ‘Session A’ and ‘Session B’ basis. Sessions A and B would be delivered on different evenings to accommodate for the commitments of the sport sector. The proposed delivery model still permits pre-planning and allows dates to be distributed prior to delivery.

### 6.3.9 Marketing and Promotion

To ensure optimal development of the University’s mentoring programme, participants enforced the need for clear marketing communications; preventing confusion and misinterpretation. Resources such as a ‘USW Mentoring webpage’ have been frequently recommended as this provides a professional image and allows key information to be easily displayed. A ‘USW Mentoring booklet’ including “A How to Access” guide as well as, “Why to Engage” section. Furthermore, presentations to organisations interested in engaging were also a popular request as this approach allows potential customers to ask questions, again preventing initial confusion or misinterpretation. Experienced mentors may be trained up to undertake the delivery of these workshops as a method of managing the capacity of those at a strategic level if required. Finally, a ‘USW Mentoring Twitter account’ also received positive support as this platform allows updates to be provided alongside raising the profile of the University’s initiative external organisations or departments.

### 6.3.10 Reviewing Spectrum

An additional study providing a greater insight into the Spectrum experience should be formulates as at the time of data collection mentees had either not completed the programme or had no implemented their learning into practice.

# 7.0 Conclusion

Throughout this summative report, a strong representation of participant’s perceptions have been expressed, with their feedback determining the underpinning themes of this paper. Through exploration it became apparent that mentoring had not previously been clearly communicated. As a result, a central definition, collated from participant’s definitions, has been produced to support greater clarity for all stakeholders. Additionally, the benefits of mentoring were identified and discussed through three themes: personal, career and organisational. Feedback identified through developing and supporting an individual, both career related and organisational benefits become apparent simultaneously. The key impacts of mentoring should be used to promote the University’s programme and should be used to sell the product to potential customers. Finally, a concise review of the University’s programme was completed, identifying its strengths, limitations and recommendations to support the progress of the programme. In turn, the author hopes the information enclosed within this report supports the University of South Wales to expand their provision, providing plentiful mentees with the opportunity to develop in line with their personal ambitions.

# 8.0 Appendix One - Interview Schedule

USW Mentoring Interview Schedule

1. Identification of name, role, and duration of time engaged with the mentoring programme, previous engagement with mentoring prior to USW scheme?
2. Firstly, I’d like to find out your view on mentoring. Can you define what mentoring means to you?
3. What are the benefits and reasons for mentoring?
4. Can you tell me about the mentoring programme?
   1. What are the strengths?
   2. What are the areas for improvement?
   3. What recommendations can you make to further improve the mentoring offer at USW? (Who? What? When?)
5. Has engaging with the programme aided you personally? (Skills developed? Changed outlook? Effect on relationships?)
   1. How?
   2. What impact has this had?
   3. What was the main reason for this?
6. Has engaging with this programme affected your career in any way? (Career change, Private mentoring, impact on organisation of employment)
   1. How?
   2. What made you want to do this?
   3. Has your company, organisation, staff seen positive impacts from this?
7. What results have you seen from the mentoring you have completed? (Increase participation, increased/ improved workforce, improved team cohesion, improved effectiveness of individual and workforce)
8. How do you think mentoring will affect you in the future?
9. What do you as a mentor/ mentee want in the future?
10. Would you recommend USW mentoring scheme?
    1. Why?
    2. To who?