mentorNET
Mentoring by Extended Networks
to Organise Volunteer Resources

mentorNET

Good practice report

A report into good practices identified relating to mentoring, creating a MOOC and developing sustainable networked organisations.

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Contents

Introduction 5
Background 5
Purpose 5
Research methods 6
Online Survey results 6
Demographic 6
Respondent experience of mentoring 7
Definition of mentoring 7
Benefits and challenges of mentoring 7
Mentoring skills 11
The mentoring relationship 13
The MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) 13
Summary 14
Analysis of desk research –
Good Practice in Mentoring and Sustainable Networks 15
MENTORING 15
Mentoring good practice 15
Benefits of using Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) to support mentoring 17
Key Competencies for Volunteer Mentors working with Migrants 17
Skills for a Successful Mentoring Relationship 18
Informational and Transformational Learning for Mentors 20
SUSTAINABLE NETWORK GOOD PRACTICE 21
Network Good Practice 21
Successful Networks 23
Mentoring Networks 25
Using support networks/mentors to support learners 25
MOOCS 27
MOOC Good Practice in Design and Implementation 27
Other relevant findings regarding MOOCs 30
E-learning – how to develop an effective online course 31
E-Learning: Online educational courses 31
What makes an effective online course? 31
Instructional Design 31
Design Theme 36
Type of Task 36
System Features 36
Research Summary 37
Conclusions on Mentoring skills 37
Conclusions on Sustainable networks 38
Conclusions on MOOC content and E-Learning 39
MOOC content 39
E-learning conclusions 41
ANNEXES 43
Annex 1: Survey 43
Annex 2: Good Practice Research Summaries 54
Mentoring/self-sustaining networks research 55
MOOC good practice research 84

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to pull together the strands of research carried out by the MentorNET project partners concerning the key skills needed to mentor migrants, the key topics that should be included in a MOOC to teach people how to mentor and the characteristics that successful sustainable networks possess. The paper also considers good practice in e-learning course design.

Background

- The desired outcome of the MentorNET project is to:
- Identify good practice for organising and delivering mentoring and creating self-sustaining networks.
- Create a mentoring MOOC which is based on identified good practice and which delivers a mentoring process that is sensitive to the differing needs of migrants from their first point of contact in a new country to when they find a country to permanently settle in.
- Identify mentor focussed networks in the partner countries and provide them with the resources and tools, one of which will be an app, based on good practice in order that they can promote mentoring and best support volunteer mentors, including volunteer mentors of migrants, nationally and internationally.

Purpose

The purpose of the research described in this paper was to inform the project team with regards to establishing the key themes and skills that need to be included in the mentoring MOOC in order to deliver a practical, usable and effective learning tool. Similarly, the research was also designed to better inform the project team about the characteristics which support successful self-sustaining networks and how these can be incorporated into national and, it is hoped, international mentoring networks.

The resultant research paper is intended not only to provide a guide for the successful development of the MentorNET project outputs, but it is also hoped that it will serve as a useful source of research data for other projects and interested parties.

Research methods

Two methods of research were used during the course of developing this report:

1. An online survey aimed at selected experts in mentoring and mentoring migrants.

2. Desk research: Looking at prior research conducted in each of the partner countries. The countries involved were Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom. This method was supplemented where possible by interviews and an informal focus group.

The online survey was created on the JISC Online Survey platform. It was distributed by email to a selection of experienced mentors . The aim of this online survey was to provide the project team with direction regarding establishing a clear definition of mentoring and identifying key elements for the MOOC content and for creating networks, rather than being a representative sample of mentors and experts, hence the number of respondents.
The survey was jointly developed and tested by the project team and is attached as Annex 1.

Online Survey results

A presentation on the survey results was delivered at the second MentorNET trans-national meeting that was meant to take place in Cyprus at the beginning of April 2020, but due to Covid-19 restrictions, was held virtually using GoTo Meeting. The survey results were as follows:

Demographic

A total of 86 people registered interest in the survey; 18 valid responses were received. Of those valid responses:
11 were from the United Kingdom
5 were from Germany
1 from Italy
1 from China
2 responses were invalid

The survey was targeted at selected experts and some experienced mentors in the UK with the option for experts from other countries to contribute. The responses were meant to provide direction for the project rather than be a representative sample.

Respondent experience of mentoring

Of the respondents, 77.8% had some mentoring experience. The range of experience was broad and included:

- Mentoring refugees to set up projects to help their communities
- Disengaged pupils at a secondary school
- Social workers
- Colleagues in the health services
- Young people
- Volunteers from a different country
- African entrepreneurs
- Migrants seeking employment
- Sports projects for migrant children
- Women and the elderly
- Master's degree students.

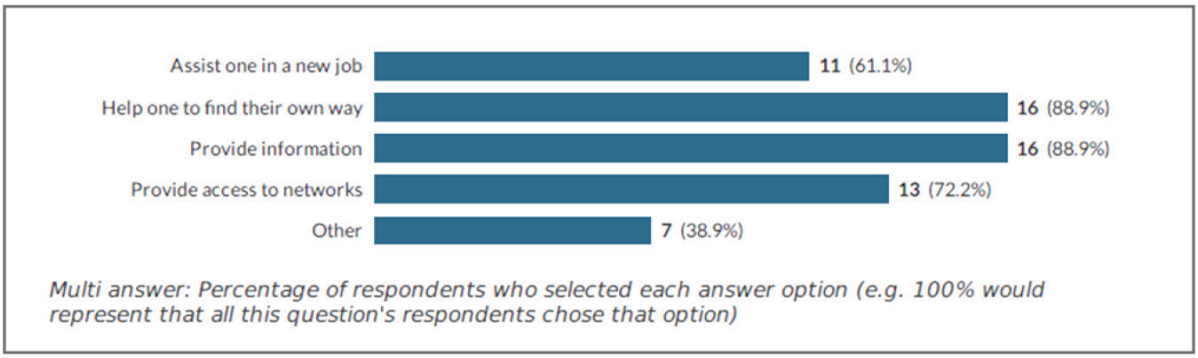
Definition of mentoring

Respondents were asked to define "mentoring". Although the responses varied, there were a number of common themes that came through. Using these, the best way to define "mentoring" appeared to be:

"... a trusted advisor or companion who offers guidance and support by sharing knowledge to help their mentees develop or enhance needed skills and knowledge that enables them to progress in their lives."

Benefits and challenges of mentoring

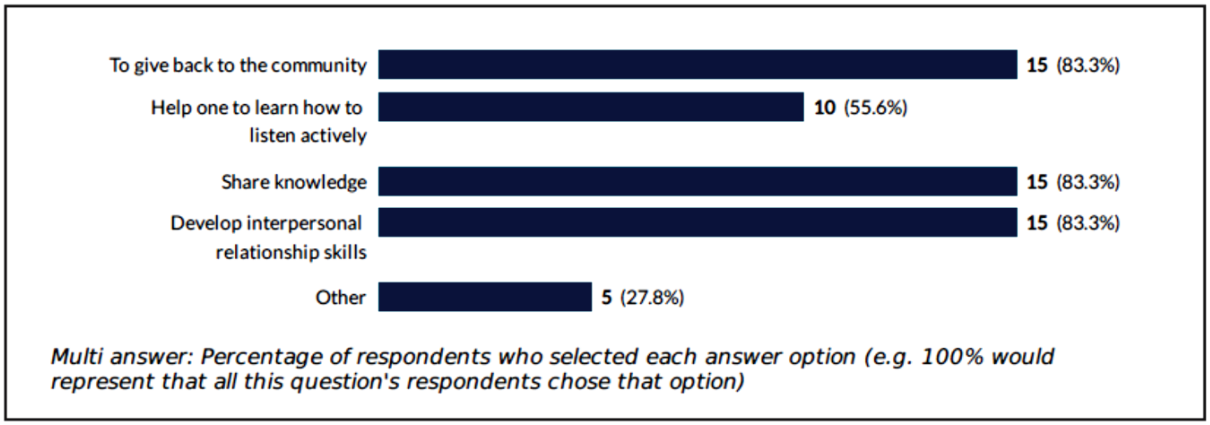
We asked respondents to state what they thought the benefits to a mentee were from being mentored:



Other responses included

- friendship
- emotional support
- boosting confidence
- self-reflection and
- overcoming problems.

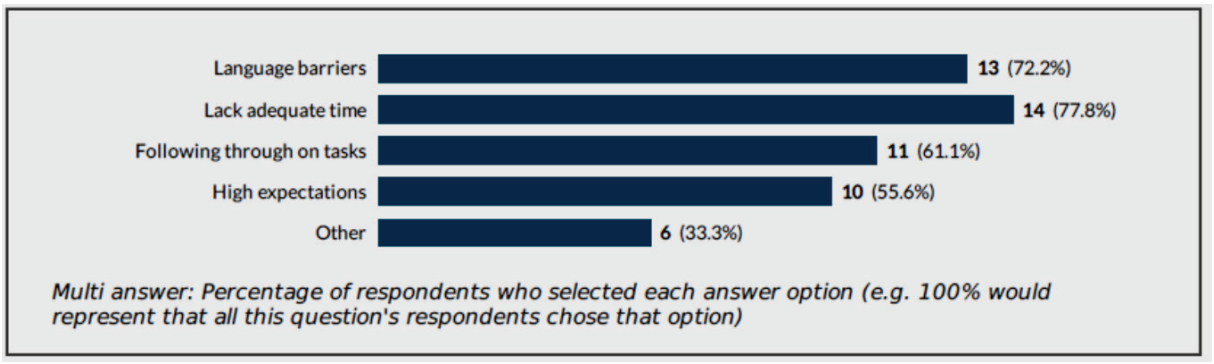
We asked respondents to state what they thought the benefits to a mentor were from being a mentor.



Other responses included:

- involvement in a cause one believes in
- helping build a better community and
- making a difference in someone else's life.

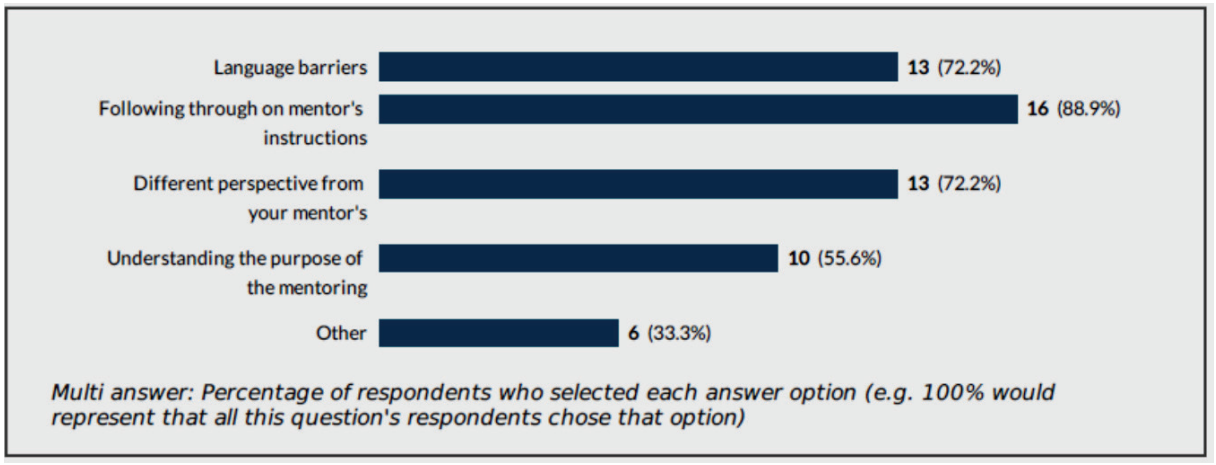
We asked respondents to state what they thought the challenges for a mentor might be.



Other responses included:

- cultural differences
- getting "too involved" and
- a lack of training to handle "emotionally charged" situations.

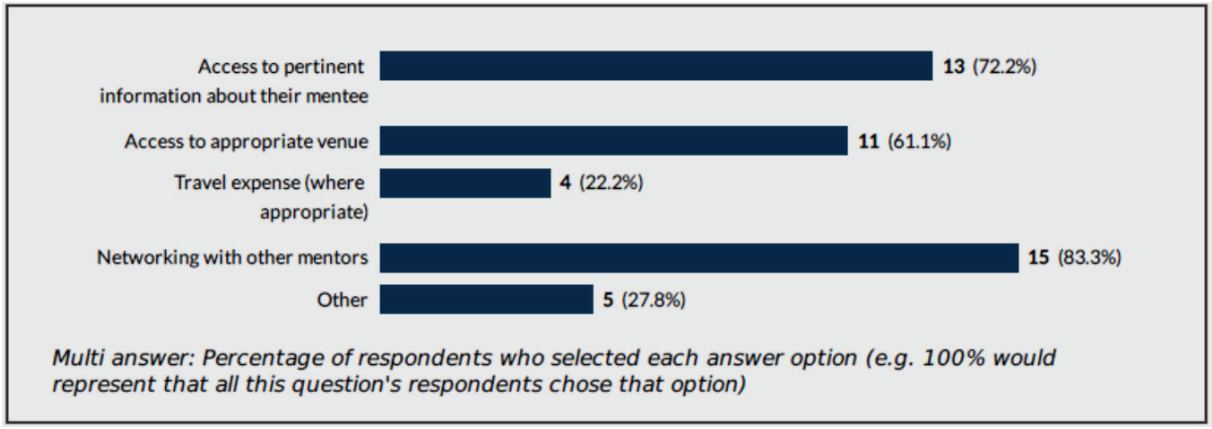
We also asked respondents to state what they thought the challenges for a mentee might be:



Other responses included:

- the balance of power in the relationship and
- high or unrealistic expectations.

We then asked respondents about what practical support a mentor would need to successfully support their mentee:

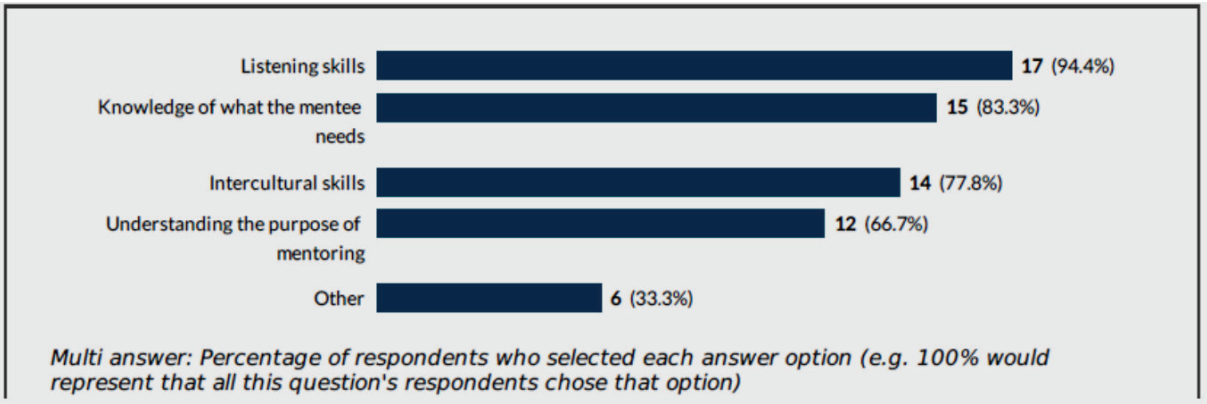


Other responses included:

- supervision and
- support from an experienced mentor.

Mentoring skills

We then asked respondents about the skills they thought a mentor should have in order to successfully support their mentee.



Other responses included:

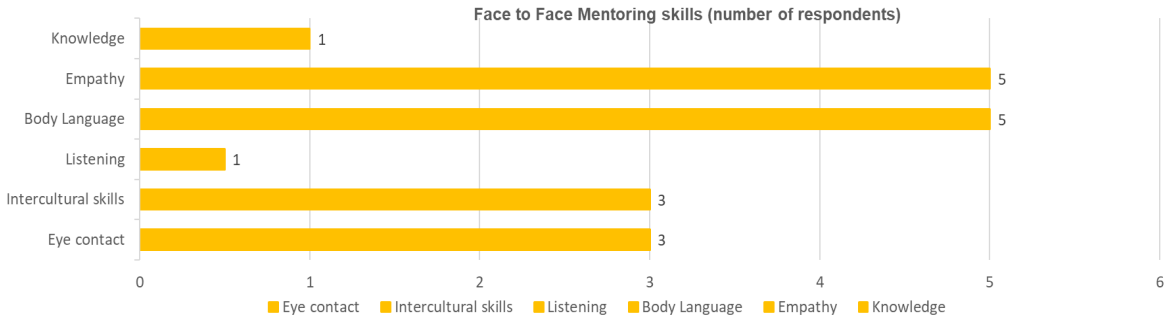
- being supportive and
- ability to handle emotional situations.

When asked which of the skills were most important, the responses were:

- Listening skills: 44%
- Knowledge of the needs of the mentee: 28%
- Understanding the purpose of mentoring: 22%
- Understanding the importance of mentoring: 6%

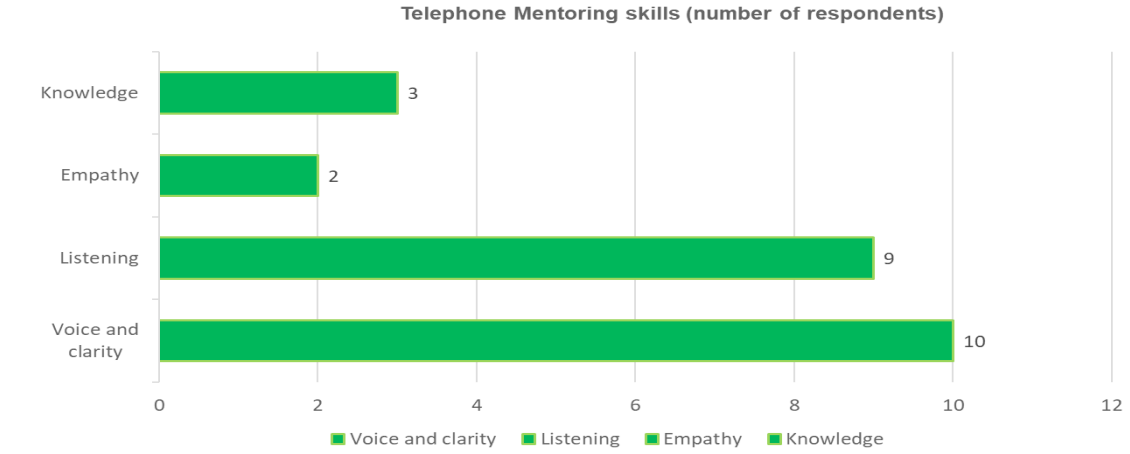
61 percent of respondents thought that the skills a mentor needs differ depending on how a mentor is in contact with their mentee.
22 percent thought that there should be some face to face contact involved. Many cited that developing empathy between the mentor and mentee was important.

Regarding face to face mentoring:



Empathy and body language were considered most important when mentoring face to face.

Regarding telephone mentoring:



Voice and clarity / listening skills were considered the most important when mentoring by telephone.