Future Frontiers: The impact of career coaching on year 11 students

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Abstract

This paper considers the issue of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and in particular it describes an evaluation of a career coaching programme conducted in a disadvantaged school for teenage students in London, England. The long-term aim of the programme is to improve destinations for children and reduce the number of NEETs, but in the shorter term the evaluation employed a quasi experimental design to identify whether the coaching produced changes in career readiness and indicators of successful transitions. The students who took part in the coaching programme showed significant increases in some aspects of career readiness and some indicators of successful transitions compared to young people who did not. The paper discusses the size of the effects found and the importance of establishing short term measures of impacts for programmes that ultimately wish to evidence long-term impacts such as reduced NEET numbers.

Introduction

Young people often need to make choices about subject, institution and qualifications that will significantly impact on the rest of their lives. This is an issue for all young people and especially those who are more disadvantaged socially, economically and geographically. This appears to be the case with only "one in three disadvantaged students gaining very good GCSE grades, compared with more than 60% of their wealthier peers. As a consequence, almost one million young people are currently not in education, employment or training." (Future Frontiers).

Educational and career choices clearly have profound implications for young people themselves, but the way in which they are handled by the education and employment system also has major societal implications: supporting or frustrating social mobility; aiding skills alignment or resulting in skills shortages; contributing to young people's engagement in school and lifetime wellbeing. This is why there is a tradition of educational activity which seeks to purposefully support young people as they embark on their careers. In England this is being aided by the implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks of good career guidance across schools and colleges.

Future Frontiers has developed a coaching programme which can be aligned against a number of these Benchmarks. The programme matches every student in a year group (typically year 11 when students are age 15-16) to a career coach for ten sessions of coaching and employer engagement (a form of mentoring) that helps students find that inspirational career and plan clearly for success. Mentoring is a voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life (Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, 2011). Mentoring can take place for a wide variety of reasons but is commonly used for aspiration raising and to support transition and the negotiation of the education system (Thompson, 2001; Rose & Jones, 2007; Bartlett, 2009).

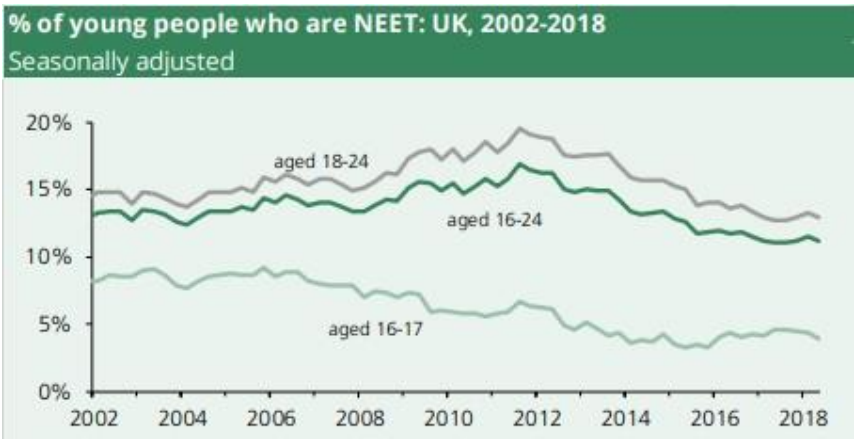
An evaluation of the impact of the programme on participants was conducted in order to help understand the effectiveness of the work and if the current model is fit for purpose.

Literature Review

The term Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) was originally intended to refer to young people under the age of 18 who had left education but had not engaged with employment or training. Because of the 1988 Social Security Act, these young people were excluded from unemployment statistics (nor able to seek benefits), producing a need to quantify, describe and understand how to support these 'NEET' young people. Today the term NEET is used in England to refer to young people aged between 16 *and 24* who are not in education, employment or training. The term NEET is distinct from the terms youth unemployment rate, economically inactive and 'unknown'.

In the U.K. there is a significant difference in levels of 'NEET' for different age bands within the 16-24 NEET definition, as shown below in Figure 1 (Powell, 2018).

FIGURE 1 NEET STATISTICS FROM 2002 TO 2018



Source: Powell, A. (2018) NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training. House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number SN06705, 24th August 2018

The percentage of people aged 16-17 who are NEET has generally declined over time from approximately 8% in 2002 to around 4% in 2018. The picture is somewhat different for those aged 18-24 where NEET percentages increased steadily from approximately 15% in 2002, to a high of around 20% in 2012, before starting to decline to approximately 13% in 2018. The difference in patterns between age groups is primarily the result of more 16-17 year olds staying in education which was fuelled by the 2007 'September Guarantee' and the 2013 Raising the Participation Age government policies. Currently there are around 7 million people between the ages of 16 and 24 in the UK and approximately 783,000 of these are NEET (Powell, 2018). Of this 783,000, approximately 37%, are unemployed and 63% are economically inactive (Powell, 2018).

The factors which are related to an increased risk of becoming NEET and determine how young people who are NEET then deal with their situation are varied but include:

- personal factors (such as health problems, lack of motivation, pregnancy/parenthood, SEND status, substance abuse)
- familial factors (for example carer responsibilities, poor relationships with parents)
- experiences of poverty (for instance eligibility for free school meals, homelessness)
- educational factors (primarily low attainment at GCSE)
- social factors such as peer groups, bullying and gang culture
- ethnicity
- structural factors (poor labour market conditions, lack of training and apprenticeship opportunities and welfare support)

(Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Gunter & Watt, 2009; Gracey & Kelly, 2010; McDonald & Shildrick, 2010; Hutchinson et al., 2016; Powell, 2018).

These factors are largely concomitant so many young people who are NEET are likely to experience several of them and typically mean the individual is not just NEET but also has reduced levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (Gracey & Kelly, 2010). Young people's experiences of being NEET are also not uniform – often they are fluid as the young people engage and disengage with opportunities over time and move in and out of being NEET (Gracey & Kelly, 2010; Hutchinson et al., 2016). The complexity of the NEET 'problem', both in terms of its causes and how young people experience it, makes it difficult to devise and implement effective policy and practice because a broad brush approach to dealing with NEETs is unlikely to unpick the complex and varying needs of NEET young people.

The career coaching evaluated in the present study is an example of what is called a prevention focused programme. Preventative programmes aim to support/prevent potential NEETs and can be both school-centred and out-of-school (Carcillo et al., 2015). Proponents of the latter argue that the underlying factors which cause young people to become NEET typically originate outside of school and so require interventions that tackle wider familial and social problems and structures (Carcillo et al., 2015). However, in support of school-centred programmes and interventions, there are excellent examples of schools in UK disadvantaged areas which outperform more advantaged competitors, for

example the BBC reported recently on a state school in Newham in East London, one of the poorest boroughs in London, who have 41 students accepted to Oxbridge. This is a rate that "rivals some top performing private schools in England" (www.bbc.co.uk).

There are several preventative approaches schools can adopt to reduce numbers of NEETS (Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012). Monitoring of individuals at risk is essential so that early interventions can be delivered if required. Schools can offer a curriculum that is more relevant to the world of work and that is delivered using a wider range of teaching and learning approaches. Additionally, high quality one to one support, both academic and pastoral, is key for reducing disengagement, as is involving parents and providing support for them. Finally, Nelson & O'Donnell suggest careers information, advice and guidance should be available to all students from year 9 onwards and be personalised.

In a school centred approach there can also be special programmes to target disadvantaged groups of students which Carcillo et al., (2015) suggest is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of early drop out from education. These programmes might be designed to improve cognitive and life skills and might use techniques such as reduced class size (e.g. project STAR in the USA, Carcillo et al., 2015), specially developed curricula (e.g. project KIPP in the USA, Carcillo et al., 2015) or using additional services on top of existing curricula (the TEIP project in Portugal, Carcillo et al., 2015).

Gracey and Kelly (2010) and Nelson and O'Donnell (2012) note that one of the primary ways to reduce NEETs is to improve careers education, information, advice and guidance. Gottfredson (2002) suggests that the age when young people may be most likely to disengage with education and future opportunities is between 11 and 14 so young people at secondary school, especially those at key transition points, are of particular need of inspiration, aspiration raising, quality advice and guidance and support.

Mentoring is one such approach, which essentially involves the development of a professional relationship in which an experienced individual guides, supports or advises another in developing specific skills and knowledge to aid personal, academic, progression or professional growth. Mentoring is popular because it is 'simple, direct, cheap, sympathetic (well regarded by others), legitimate (an appropriate way for adults to engage with young people) and flexible' (Hooley, 2016, pp. 1). Mentoring can provide support, guidance and a positive role model for those young people who lack this at home.

Mentoring programmes have been used for many years with young people, particularly disadvantaged youth, to provide adult support and guidance which may be lacking at home. There are a number of evaluations of mentoring programmes designed to improve a variety of education and career based outcomes (see for example Du Bois et al., 2002; Du Bois et al., 2011; Cardillo et al., 2015; Hooley, 2016) and these typically show mentoring impacts positively on:

- commitment to, and engagement with, learning
- attendance
- attainment
- progression

In the UK employer led mentoring has become particularly popular as it can provide the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that parents from less well-connected backgrounds may lack. It can take a variety of forms but is typically viewed positively by the mentees and has a range of desirable outcomes including better behaviour and school engagement, improved attainment and improved educational and career progression (Hooley, 2016). The effects of mentoring may be small to moderate but there is compelling evidence for it and mentoring is a relatively inexpensive intervention (Hooley, 2016).

The above literature is focussed on young people at risk of becoming NEET, or who are already NEET. Many programmes and interventions (which are varied in their content, focus and application) are focussed on young people generally and attempt to support their decisions regarding subject choices and progression pathways. Several evaluation studies for career interventions with young people are available (e.g., Hirschi & Läge, 2008, Nota & Soresi, 2004; Repetto, 2001; Turner & Lapan, 2005) which typically show small effect sizes of around 0.30 to 0.34 (Cohen's d).

Whilst we undoubtedly need policies and programmes which unpick deep seated social structural problems, the fact remains that many young people are disadvantaged and not given the capital from their family and social networks that support positive transitions. At this point in time, school-centred programmes and measures appear to be favoured in the UK. Schools and colleges can help to overcome issues in the backgrounds of disadvantaged young people by delivering high quality careers guidance. One specific activity which has been consistently shown to have positive effects, if done properly, is mentoring. One to one mentoring can provide positive role models, social and cultural capital, raise aspirations and develop career learning.

Aims and objectives

The aim was to investigate the impact of the coaching programme offered by Future Frontiers on the year 11 students who completed it. The research sought to:

1. Identify whether completing the coaching increased indicators of successful transitions
2. Identify whether completing the coaching increased career readiness
3. At a later date identify whether taking part in the coaching influences sustained destinations and reduces NEET numbers.

Methodology

A quasi-experimental design was used to determine the impact of engaging with the coaching programme offered by Future Frontiers. The evaluation strategy followed the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation which considers impacts in terms of short (learning), medium (behaviour) and long (results) term outcomes. In this case learning (career readiness, indicators of successful transitions) were assessed using two psychometrics and at a later date in the future the

evaluation will also consider results (actual destinations). Two schools took part; one school who was using the coaching and one who was not. Pre and post measures of career readiness and indicators of successful transitions were used as indicators of short and medium-term outcomes.

Methods

Year 11 students from two schools were invited to complete a short paper-based questionnaire during class time; once before the coaching began and again. A trained team member introduced the questionnaire, ethical issues and informed consent to the students and explained each section of the questionnaire. The team member and a teacher remained in the class whilst the students completed the questionnaire and answered any queries the students had.

The questionnaire was comprised from two separate measures; the Student Career Readiness Index (SCRI) and the Indicators of Successful Transitions (IST) developed by the Employers and Education Taskforce (Mann, Kashefpakdel & Redhill, 2017).

The SCRI assesses young people's career readiness along four dimensions – career planning, transition skills, information and help seeking and work readiness. The SCRI is comprised of two sections; the first assesses which career education, information, advice and guidance activities students have undertaken (response scale is Yes, No, I don't know):

- I have talked to a current apprentice
- I have accessed information about apprenticeships
- I have visited a university
- I have accessed information about universities
- I have met someone from the world of work (whilst at school)
- I have accessed information about work and careers
- I have visited a workplace

The second assesses career readiness along four dimensions (response scale is I don't agree, I slightly agree, I somewhat agree, I mostly agree, I completely agree, I don't know):

1. Career planning
2. Transition skills
3. Information and help seeking
4. Work readiness

Table 1 shows the items which load onto each dimension.

Table 1 Items for each dimension of the SCRI

Career Planning	***Transition Skills***
I can choose a career that fits with my interests.	I have considered whether university is right for me.
I can decide what my ideal job would be.	I have considered whether moving straight to work after school is right for me.
I can choose a career that will allow me to live the life that I want to lead.	I can write a good C.V.
I can assess my strengths and weaknesses.	I have considered whether an apprenticeship is right for me.
I will continue to work for my career goal even when I get frustrated or hit a barrier.	I can talk with someone who works in a job I am interested in
I can decide what is most important to me in my working life.	I can identify employers and organisations relevant to my career interests
I will continue to work at my studies even when I get frustrated.	***Information and help seeking skills***
I can choose a career that fits with what I am good at.	I can find information online about jobs I am interested in.
I can work well with different sorts of people.	I can seek help and support with my future education and career when I need it.
I can make a plan of my goals for the next five years.	I know what I need to do if I am having trouble with my school-work.
I can make my own decisions throughout my career	I can find out information about colleges and universities.
I have considered a range of careers and focused on those that are best for me	I can learn new skills throughout my life.
I know what qualifications are needed for the careers that I am interested in	***Work readiness***
	I will be successful at job interviews.
	I will be able to change jobs if I don't like the one I have in the future.

When responses are entered into SPSS the response scale options are assigned numerical values:

- 0 – I don't know
- 1 – I don't agree
- 2 – I slightly agree
- 3 – I somewhat agree
- 4 – I mostly agree
- 5 – I completely agree

Scores for each dimension can range from:

1. Career planning: 0 to 65
2. Transition skills: 0 to 30
3. Information and help seeking: 0 to 25
4. Work readiness: 0 to 10

In each case a lower score indicates a lower level of skill/readiness.

The IST examines four dimensions also – Thinking about the future, talking about the future, experiencing the future and thinking about school. The Indicators of Successful Transitions (IST) questionnaire developed by the Education & Employers Taskforce (Mann, Kashefpakdel & Rehill, 2017) provides scores for four criteria which underpin successful transitions from school. The four criteria are:

1. Thinking about the future:

Scores can range from 0 to 17. The higher the score, the more research, thinking and planning the individual has done regarding their future career ambitions. A score of 15 or more indicates extensive research, thinking and planning, 10-14 indicates some has been done but that they could benefit from doing more and 0-9 indicates the student needs to apply more thought to their future career ambitions and how to achieve them (the student is a priority for further attention).

2. Talking about the future:

Scores can range from 0 to 13. The higher the score the more contact the individual has had with a range of professionals including employers, careers guidance professionals and teachers. Eleven or more indicates the individual has had extensive contact with professionals, 5-10 indicates the individual has likely spoken with teachers and attended careers talks for example but would benefit from contact with a wider range of professionals and 0-4 indicates the individual is a priority for further attention and needs greater support in discussing future careers.

3. Experiencing the future:

Scores can range from 0 to 8 – the higher the score the more experience the individual has had with the working world. A score of 6 or more indicates extensive experience, 3-5 indicates some experience but could benefit from having more contact with employers and a score of 0-2 indicates the individual is a priority for further attention and needs to do more to gain experience of the working world.

4. Thinking about school:

Scores for this are either 0 (does not believe or is not sure whether their time at school has been useful) or 5 (does believe school has been useful) and is an indicator of whether the individual has developed an understanding of the ways in which education is of value to future employment.

Results

In this section we present the findings from analyses which explore:

1. The characteristics of the sample
2. Statistical analyses of pre- and post-coaching IST survey scores
3. Statistical analyses of pre- and post-coaching
    a. CEIAG activities

b. Career readiness scores

Sample characteristics

The total number of participants who completed questionnaires was 219, of these 104 were from the school where the coaching was taking part and 115 were from the 'control' school. In total there were 111 females, 101 males and 7 students who preferred not to say. One hundred and two students stated they were of Black (African/Caribbean/British) ethnicity, 41 were White, 28 were of mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 23 stated they were of 'other' ethnicity and 7 preferred not to say. Twenty students stated that both their parents had a degree, 38 stated one parent had a degree, 62 stated neither of their parents had a degree and 96 did not know if their parents had degrees. Students from the two schools who took part in the study were not significantly different from each other on any of these characteristics.

Indicators of Successful Transitions

To determine whether there was an effect on indicators of successful transitions of taking part in the coaching, a series of mixed ANOVA's were run. The mixed ANOVA assessed whether there is an overall difference between the groups (referred to as a main effect of school), whether there is an overall effect of time (referred to as a main effect of time) and whether the effect of time was the same or different for the two groups (referred to as an interaction effect). The results also provide a measure of effect size referred to as Partial Eta Squared which indicates whether the size of the effect is:

- Small = .01
- Moderate = .06
- Large = .14

We hypothesised that the coaching would increase IST scores and so those students in the coaching school would see an increase in IST and SCRI scores over and above any changes that took place over the course of two terms in school generally (i.e. compared to the control school). Mean scores for each IST criterion were calculated for each school (see Table 6). Average scores for 'Thinking about the future' for both schools decrease over time, as do the scores for 'Thinking about school' for the coaching school students. 'Talking about the future' and 'Experiencing the future' both show increases over time in students from both schools.

TABLE 2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR IST CRITERIA PRE AND POST-COACHING

IST Dimension	School	N	Mean scores	
			Pre	Post
Thinking about the future total score	Coaching	103	6.32	5.01
	Control	114	5.59	4.25
	Total	*217*	*5.94*	*4.61*
Talking about the future total score	Coaching	103	4.94	8.23
	Control	114	5.18	6.18
	Total	*217*	*5.07*	*7.15*
Experiencing the future	Coaching	103	2.69	3.20
	Control	114	2.82	2.98
	Total	*217*	*2.75*	*3.09*

Thinking about school	Coaching	103	3.54	3.98
	Control	114	2.98	2.23
	Total	*217*	*3.24*	*2.44*

Thinking about the future

Descriptive statistics showed that mean 'thinking about the future' scores decreased in both schools between pre- and post-coaching (see Table 2). A mixed ANOVA revealed there was a significant effect of time on scores with both schools reporting significantly lower scores post-coaching (F = 14.570, p = .000.). Partial eta squared = .064 which indicates a moderate effect size. There was no effect of time nor was there an interaction effect which suggest that taking part in the coaching did not affect 'thinking about the future' scores.

Talking about the future

The descriptive statistics showed mean 'talking about the future' scores increased in both groups of students between pre- and post-coaching. A mixed ANOVA revealed that there was a main effect of school on 'talking about the future' with the students in the coaching school scoring significantly higher overall than those in the control school (F=7.529, p = .007). Partial eta squared = .034 which indicates a small effect size. There was also a highly significant effect of time (F=75.332, p = .000) with post-coaching scores overall being greater than pre-coaching scores. Partial eta squared = .259 which indicates a large effect size.

Finally, there was a significant interaction effect (F=21.730, p =.000) with students in the coaching school reporting a greater increase in 'talking about the future' scores than students in the control school. Partial eta squared = .092 which indicates a moderate to large effect size. This suggests that taking part in the coaching did positively influence 'talking about the future'.

Experiencing the future

The descriptive statistics showed there was a small increase in mean 'experiencing the future' scores in both the coaching and control school students over time. A mixed ANOVA revealed that there was no main effect of school and no significant interaction effect but there was a significant effect of time on 'experiencing the future' (F=5.103, p =.022) however, partial eta squared = .24 which indicates a small effect. This means that all students, regardless of whether they received the coaching or not, reported significantly higher 'experiencing the future' scores post-coaching.

Thinking about school

The descriptive statistics (Table 2) showed that average 'thinking about school' scores increased for the coaching school but decreased for the control school. A mixed ANOVA found a significant main effect of school (F= 20.859, p = .000) on 'thinking about school' with those in the coaching school overall reporting significantly higher scores (mean = 3.76) than those in the control school (2.61). Partial eta squared = .08 which indicates this effect was a moderate effect. There was also a significant interaction effect (F= 9.475, p = .002) with coaching school students scores increasing over time and control school students scores decreasing over time. Partial eta squared = .042 which indicates a small to moderate effect. This means that:

- Students in the coaching school were more likely than those in the control school to believe that school had helped them think about their future
- Coaching increased those students from the coaching school propensity to believe that school had helped them think about their future.

CEIAG activities

The frequency of CIEAG activities students reported post-coaching was assessed and these are shown in Table 3 plotted against the frequencies for pre-coaching. The number of students reporting they had done an activity increased from pre to post for all activities in both schools, except for accessing information about careers and work which decreased in the control school (but not in the coaching school).

TABLE 3 FREQUENCIES OF CIEAG ACTIVITIES DONE POST-COACHING BY SCHOOL

Activity	Response	Coaching school		Control school	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I have talked to a current apprentice	Yes	30	54	13	28
	No	56	35	79	64
	Don't know	18	14	23	21
I have accessed information about apprenticeships	Yes	38	47	42	66
	No	47	43	56	34
	Don't know	19	13	17	12
I have visited a university	Yes	63	66	40	49
	No	35	34	74	51
	Don't know	6	3	1	2
I have accessed information about universities	Yes	62	68	68	83
	No	31	27	40	31
	Don't know	11	8	7	1
I have met someone from the world of work (whilst at school)	Yes	79	91	75	64
	No	14	6	26	19
	Don't know	10	6	13	29
I have accessed information about work and careers	Yes	74	81	92	82
	No	30	15	15	17
	Don't know	56	6	8	3
I have visited a workplace	Yes	77	78	85	85
	No	19	18	25	25
	Don't know	7	7	5	5

There is no non-parametric test equivalent of a mixed ANOVA so we could not directly test to see if the change in responses over time differed between the two schools. However, it is possible to run Chi square analyses to compare responses from the two schools post-coaching.

Before the coaching there were two significant differences:

- the coaching school students were more likely to have talked with a current apprentice
- the coaching school students were more likely to have visited a university.

Chi square analyses revealed that *after* the coaching:

- the number of students from the coaching school who had talked with an apprentice (n=54) had increased compared to time 1 (n=30) *and* was significantly greater than the number of students from the control school who had at time 2 (n=28, X= 17.714, p = .000.)
- the number of students from the coaching school who had visited a university was significantly greater than the number from the control school (X= 26.514, p = .000)
- students from the coaching school were more likely to have met someone from the world of work though school and were less likely to reply 'I don't know' than students from the control school

Career readiness

To determine whether there was an effect on career readiness of taking part in the coaching a series of mixed ANOVA's were run. The results are presented below by career readiness dimension.

Career planning and management skills

Descriptive statistics are shown below in Table 4 and suggest that students from the coaching school report an increase in career planning and management skills scores from pre to post-coaching, but the control school students do not. The results of the mixed methods ANOVA showed that there was a significant main effect of school, F = 6.337, p = .013 (partial eta squared = .04 which is a small effect size) and a significant main effect of time, F = 10.417, p = .001 (partial eta squared = .054 which indicates a small to moderate effect size). Finally, there was also a significant interaction effect F = 7.594, p = .006 (partial eta squared = .04 which indicates a small effect size). These results suggest that:

- Coaching school students reported higher overall career planning and management scores than control school students
- All students reported higher career planning and management scores post-coaching
- Students from the coaching school reported a significantly greater increase in career planning and management scores at post compared to pre-coaching than the students from the control school.

These findings suggest that participating in the coaching significantly increased career planning and management skills as measured through the SCRI.

TABLE 4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR MIXED ANOVA FOR CAREER PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

	School	Mean	SD
Pre-coaching	Coaching	45.07	12.06
	Control	43.10	12.64
	Total	44.11	12.35

Post-coaching	Coaching	50.15	12.94
	Control	43.50	14.26
	Total	46.91	13.96

Transition skills

Descriptive statistics are shown below in Table 5 and suggest that students from both the coaching and control schools report an increase in transition skills scores from pre to post-coaching, but the increase is greater amongst coaching school students. The results of the mixed methods ANOVA showed that there was a significant main effect of time, F = 163.372, p = .000 (partial eta squared = .436 which indicates a very large effect size) and there was also a significant interaction effect F = 14.598, p = .000 (partial eta squared = .065 which indicates a moderate effect). This means that:

- Students from both schools reported higher transition skill scores post-coaching
- Students from the coaching school reported a significantly greater increase in transition skills scores at post compared to pre-coaching than the students from the control school.

These findings suggest that participating in the coaching significantly increased transition skills as measured through the SCRI.

TABLE 5 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR MIXED ANOVA FOR TRANSITION SKILLS

	School	Mean	SD
Pre-coaching	Coaching	13.09	5.36
	Control	13.41	5.49
	Total	13.25	5.42
Post-coaching	Coaching	19.60	6.57
	Control	17.15	6.08
	Total	18.47	6.41

Information and Help Seeking

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 6 and suggest that students from both the coaching and control schools report an increase in help seeking scores from pre to post-coaching, but the increase was greater amongst coaching school students. The results of the mixed methods ANOVA showed that there was a significant main effect of school, F = 6.380, p = .012 (partial eta squared = .029 which indicates a small effect size) and there was also a significant interaction effect F = 6.440, p = .012 (partial eta squared = .029 which indicates a small effect size). This means that:

- Students from the coaching school reported higher information and help seeking scores at both time points compared to students from the control school
- Students from the coaching school reported an increase in information and help seeking scores at post compared to pre-coaching but the

students in the control school reported a decrease – the effect of time was different on the two schools.

These findings suggest that participating in the coaching significantly increased information and help seeking scores as measured through the SCRI.

TABLE 6 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR MIXED ANOVA FOR INFORMATION AND HELP SEEKING

	School	Mean	SD
Pre-coaching	Coaching	18.24	5.36
	Control	17.74	5.49
	Total	18.00	5.42
Post-coaching	Coaching	18.71	6.57
	Control	16.51	6.08
	Total	17.55	6.41

Work Readiness

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 7 and suggest that students from both the coaching and control schools reported an increase in work readiness scores from pre to post-coaching, but the increase was greater amongst coaching school students. The results of the mixed methods ANOVA showed that there was a significant main effect of school, $F = 8.388$, $p = .004$ (partial eta squared = .038 which indicates a small effect size) and there was also a significant main effect of time $F = 11.513$, $p = .001$ (partial eta squared = .051 which indicates a small to moderate effect size). Finally, there was also a significant interaction effect, $F = 4.673$, $p = .032$ (partial eta squared = .021 which indicates a small effect size). This means that:

- Students from the coaching school reported higher work readiness scores at both time points than the students from the control school
- Students from both schools reported higher work readiness scores at post-coaching compared to pre-coaching
- Students from the coaching school reported a significantly greater increase in work readiness over time than the students in the control school.

These findings suggest that participating in the coaching significantly increased work readiness as measured through the SCRI.

TABLE 7 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR MIXED ANOVA FOR WORK READINESS

	School	Mean	SD
Pre-coaching	Coaching	5.66	2.68
	Control	5.20	2.91
	Total	5.41	2.81
Post-coaching	Coaching	6.76	2.23
	Control	5.44	2.81
	Total	6.07	2.63

Discussion

The students from the two schools taking part in the research were equivalent with respect to numbers of males/females, ethnicity and parental degree status. Before the coaching began, students typically scored within the low to middle ranges on each of the Indicators of Successful Transition criteria and this did not differ by school. Students were more likely than not to have visited a workplace, met an employer or employee and have accessed careers and labour market information. Although many students had visited a university, more than half had not (or didn't know if they had). Significantly fewer students had accessed information about apprenticeships and fewer still had talked with a current apprentice. The students in the coaching school were more likely to have talked with a current apprentice and visited a university than those in the control school. SCRI dimension scores did not differ by school, gender, ethnicity or parental degree status.

After the coaching had taken place, students who received the coaching showed significant increases in 'talking about the future', 'thinking about school', career planning and management skills, transition skills, information and help seeking and in work readiness compared to students who did not. Taking part in the coaching programme typically had small to moderate effects on career readiness and indicators of successful transitions which is similar to, or better than, the effect sizes found in other evaluations of career interventions (see e.g. Du Bois et al., 2002; Du Bois et al., 2011; Cardillo et al., 2015; Hirschi & Läge, 2008; Hooley, 2016; Nota & Soresi, 2004; Repetto, 2001; Turner & Lapan, 2005.)

The larger effects were found in relation to 'thinking about school', 'talking about the future' and transition skills. It is perhaps not surprising that 'talking about the future' scores increased significantly in those who had been career coached however it is of interest that transition skills and 'thinking about school' increased significantly. The latter appears be in line with previous findings such as those discussed in Hooley (2016); namely that commitment to, and engagement with, learning can improve as result of being mentored. The 'thinking about school' factor is a measure of the extent to which the individual believes school has been useful and is an indicator of whether the individual has developed an understanding of the ways in which education is of value to future employment. It could be assumed that if the student has increased 'thinking about school' that there may be increased engagement with learning and possibly even increased attendance. Increased transition skills suggests that the coached students were more likely to respond favourably to some or all of the following:

- I have considered whether university is right for me.
- I have considered whether moving straight to work after school is right for me.
- I can write a good C.V.
- I have considered whether an apprenticeship is right for me.
- I can talk with someone who works in a job I am interested in
- I can identify employers and organisations relevant to my career interests

More favourable responses to these statements implies a higher level of consideration of all the possible pathways and the identification of people and

skills which will help them to transition into the role they desire. Analysis of sustained destinations in a later phase will allow us to determine if these measures of learning translate into results further down the line.

Conclusions

This paper describes the short-term impacts of an in-school career coaching intervention which uses a form of mentoring to support year 11 students by providing career related learning. A quasi-experimental design revealed that significant increases in career readiness and indicators of successful transitions took place in those students who received the career coaching compared to those who did not. Specifically, those students who undertook coaching reported greater increases in:

- IST criteria: Talking about the future – moderate to large effect
- IST criteria: Thinking about school – small effect
- SCRI criteria: Career planning – small effect
- SCRI criteria: Transition skills – moderate effect
- SCRI criteria: Information and help seeking – small effect
- SCRI criteria: Work readiness – small effect

The sizes of these effects were typically small to moderate which places them on a par with, or above, other career interventions aimed at young people. The changes were most notable for the SCRI criteria of Transition skills and for the Indicators of Successful Transitions criteria 'talking about the future' and 'thinking about school'. Destinations (sustained) of the students after year 11 will be gathered at a later date and will allow us to determine whether career readiness and indicators of successful transitions can be causally associated with intended and sustained destinations. This helps us to understand the learning that needs to take place to influence thinking and behaviour related to career choices (and thereby helping to reduce NEET levels). It also gives the two tools used here (the SCRI and Indicators of Successful Transitions) a level of predictive validity.

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