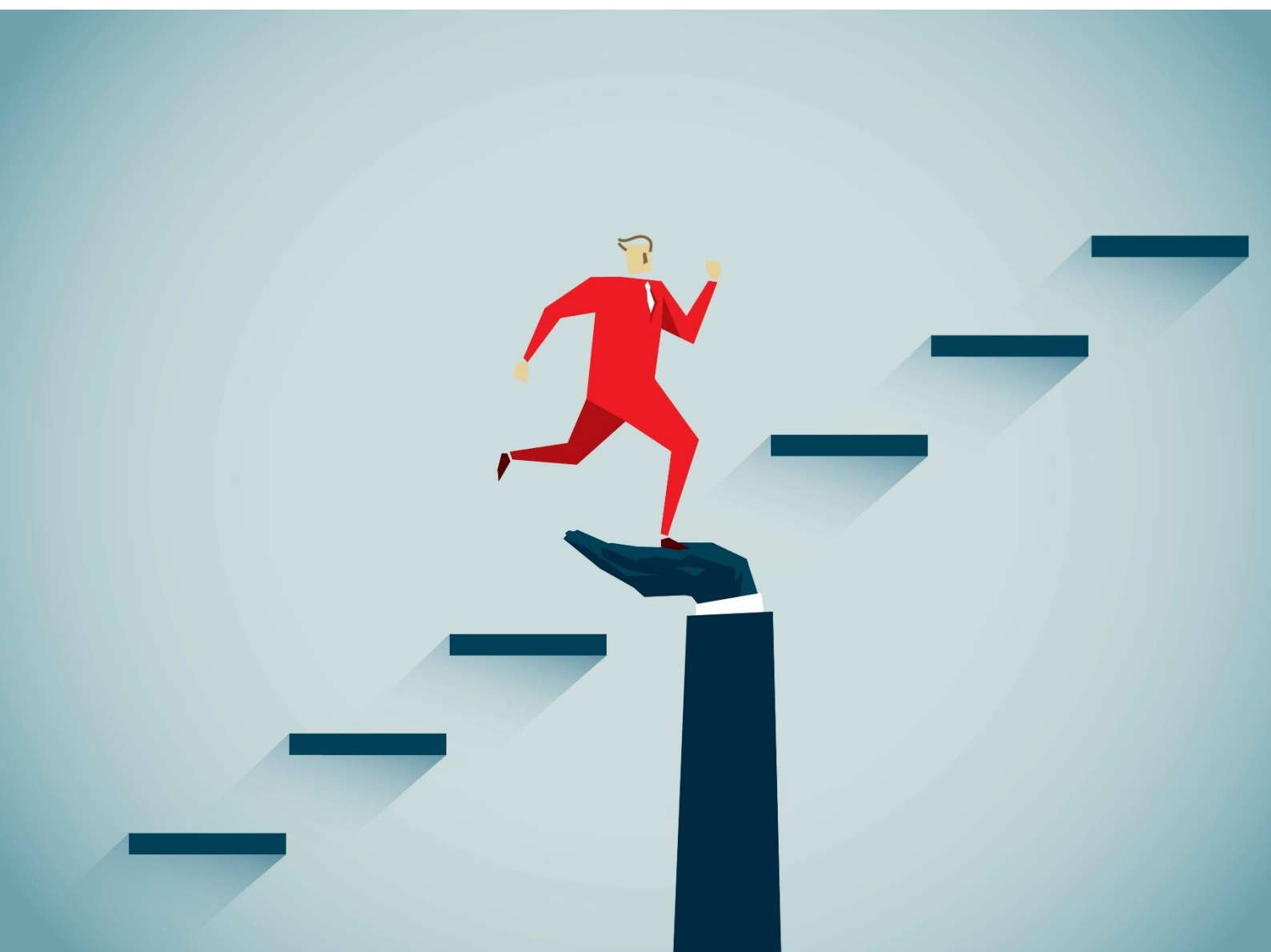


# Mentoring for Growth Process Evaluation

Report to Be the Business

March 2020



**SQW**



# Executive Summary

## Context

1. Productivity is the main driver of long-term economic growth and higher living standards. The UK's level of productivity remains low compared to other major advanced economies such as the US, France and Germany. In addition, UK productivity growth has slowed more since the global financial crisis in 2008. This is a national problem that needs to be addressed.
2. The Productivity Leadership Group (PLG), convened by Sir Charlie Mayfield has estimated that improving the performance of the 'long tail' of less productive businesses could create over £100 billion in economic value each year. The PLG also highlighted that management practices are significantly higher in other countries such as US, Japan and Germany; and that management practices have a direct link with differences in productivity. It has called for a business-led response to the UK's productivity challenge and identified improving SME management and leadership capability as the key to change.
3. Be the Business (BtB) is a business-led initiative, set up to act as a catalyst for improving productivity. It aims to build a movement to raise productivity by improving the management and leadership capabilities of SMEs – encouraging the adoption of best-practice management techniques and digital technologies through a range of programmes and activities for SMEs.
4. Within this context, BtB's Mentoring for Growth (MfG) programme seeks to raise productivity by improving management and leadership practices in SMEs through connecting SME leaders (mentees) with business leaders from top-tier firms (mentors). This provides mentoring support and guidance on specific needs of SMEs on a pro-bono basis. The mentoring aims to improve management and leadership capabilities of individuals and, in turn, improve firm-level performance and productivity.
5. The programme was piloted in 2018 with four Growth Hubs – Manchester, Birmingham, London and North East – supporting c. 180 SMEs. The Growth Company in Manchester was appointed as the national delivery partner to work with BtB for scaling-up the programme.
6. The programme addresses key market failures that prevent the expertise of top tier firms trickling down into smaller businesses. These mainly relate to: capability, information and co-ordination failures. All firms need effective leadership and skilled management to perform well and develop their leaders and managers, but smaller businesses often find this difficult.

## Evaluation objectives and approach

7. SQW, working with Belmana, undertook a process evaluation of the MfG programme – to assess its implementation and scale up going forward. In addition, the evaluation sought to capture evidence of early effects on programme participants: individual mentees and mentors and their respective organisations. The evaluation evidence involved a theory-based assessment to test the extent to which programme delivery was in line with the refined logic model and theory of change. This collected and analysed evidence through interviews with 12 stakeholders, 40 mentees and 36 mentors, and was supported by a review of programme documentation and monitoring data.

## Emerging conclusions

### *Effectiveness and efficiency of delivery*

8. **Overall, mentees found the programme delivery to be effective and efficient.** Most mentees and mentors rated the quality of the overall delivery as at least four out of five, and most mentees would recommend the programme to other SME leaders. The process was seen to be well-defined and consultees did not report any major gaps in the key stages of the delivery process. The following two specific aspects of delivery worked well.
9. **Recruitment** – mentees were generally informed of the programme aims, support and eligibility. Mentees attributed this to the quality of their interactions with the Growth Hub advisors and the programme’s simple offer. Recruitment to MfG by the Growth Hubs was often seen by mentees as verification that its aims were aligned with their business need and they were eligible for support. Mentees and mentors completed profile application forms as part of the recruitment process. These forms and the subsequent interview process were well regarded by both mentees and mentors. All mentee and mentor consultees understood what was expected of them and most felt that the timeline for recruitment had been communicated. The positive contribution of PLG in recruiting for the pilot was recognised by mentors and stakeholders.
10. **Matching** – the matching process was considered to be the most important step by all consultees. Recruitment was seen to have facilitated high-quality matching by the Growth Hubs in terms of personality, expertise and experience. Overall, mentees thought they were “well matched” in terms of these three aspects. Mentees were not offered a choice of mentors by the Growth Hubs but there was a good level of trust that Growth Hubs were best placed to make a match. The matching process was thought to have improved over time. Mentee feedback indicated that the ‘personal chemistry’ in the mentoring relationships was an important enabling factor for individual and organisational mentee benefits.
11. Within the context of these overall positive findings, the evaluation identified some aspects of programme delivery to be working less well: managing different expectations from mentoring; communication with mentees and mentors after matching; post-match engagement procedures for mentees and mentors; marketing and promotion of MfG.

### *Early effects of the programme*

12. **The MfG programme activities have translated into key early effects for mentees:** increased awareness of management and leadership practices, increased confidence in implementing these practices, and development of soft skills, notably: communication, teamwork and time management. The ‘trust’ developed between the mentees and mentors has helped mentees individually and resulted in positive outcomes for their organisations (e.g. improvements to company structures; clearer company vision; new marketing and staff retention strategies).
13. **In most cases (32 SMEs), mentoring relationships generated positive organisational effects.** There is evidence from mentee consultations that the programme has generated improvements to SME business performance and productivity: 10 SMEs reported productivity

gains e.g. through implementing new cost systems. However, mentee consultees were not able to quantify improvements in business performance and productivity.

14. **The ‘trust’ along with the openness and collaboration developed between the mentees and mentors helped mentees individually and resulted in positive outcomes for their organisations.** Most mentees reported that the dynamic with their mentor was an enabling factor to their individual-level and organisational-level benefits. We consider the personal dynamic – specifically the ‘trust factor’ – to be a critical element in effective mentoring and realising organisational benefits. Therefore, programme activities which further cultivate and encourage this will be essential in the scale up.
15. The feedback from mentors (and stakeholders) suggested mentors also experienced benefits from the programme in three main ways: increased learning (16 responses); improved personal development including soft skills (13 responses); and improved mentoring skills (11 responses). Overall, mentors had more confidence, better awareness and understanding of the ‘SME world’. The extent to which the individual benefits identified influenced changes within the mentor organisation remains to be seen, but we found no evidence of this to date.

### *Assessment against the programme logic model*

16. The MfG programme has delivered activities as set out in the logic model and theory of change. The activities were aligned with the rationale for the programme to develop management and leadership practices of mentee businesses and improve business performance and productivity. The activities were appropriate and relevant in addressing market failures and barriers to SMEs’ adoption of management and leadership practices. The activities have resulted in early effects for individual mentees and in some cases on their business performance and productivity that would not have happened otherwise. **There is medium-to-high outcome additionality for the MfG programme:** six mentee responded benefits would not have occurred at all, and 30 mentee responded benefits accelerated (between six months and two years), were of higher quality and on a larger scale. These findings are encouraging given the relatively short time since mentoring relationships ended and the long time for effects to materialise as a result of activities undertaken. That said, the reported productivity gains should be treated with a degree of caution for two reasons: businesses considered productivity in a wide variety of ways, e.g. in terms of efficiency, reduced costs, and business growth; and mentees were not able to quantify the productivity gains.

## Recommendations

17. We make the following recommendations for the future development of MfG.

- R1:** Increase marketing and promotional activities of the programme.
- R2:** Establish a consistent induction process for mentors.
- R3:** Continue to prioritise the quality of the matching process.
- R4:** Improve communication with mentees and mentors.
- R5:** Identify and ensure ‘ownership’ of mentoring relationships.
- R6:** Ensure improving productivity is the core objective of the programme/ mentoring.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since the global financial crisis in 2008, the UK's productivity growth has remained slow, for which a wide range of possible explanations have been put forward. Understanding what works in raising productivity could potentially have a large impact on the UK's economy. Haldane (2017)<sup>1</sup> argues that if all UK businesses made improvements to their productivity it could deliver a boost to aggregate UK productivity of around 13%. The Productivity Leadership Group (PLG),<sup>2</sup> convened by Sir Charlie Mayfield has estimated that improving the performance of the 'long tail' of less productive businesses could create over £100 billion in economic value each year.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.2 Be the Business (BtB) is a business-led initiative, set up to act as a catalyst for improving productivity. It aims to build a movement to raise productivity by improving the management and leadership capabilities of SMEs – encouraging the adoption of best-practice management techniques and digital technologies through a range of programmes and activities for SMEs. The Business Productivity Review (2019)<sup>4</sup> confirmed:
- The government is providing up to £18.6m of funding to Be the Business to help SMEs better understand the simple changes they can make to raise their productivity levels by adopting best practice leadership and management techniques and making use of tried and tested technologies.*
- 1.3 BtB's Mentoring for Growth (MfG) programme aims to improve management and leadership practices in SMEs through bespoke mentoring from expert business leaders at top-tier firms – providing high quality (pro-bono) mentoring on specific needs of SMEs. It recruits and matches SMEs to an experienced business leader from one of the highly successful firms participating in the programme. The programme enables and accelerates changes in the way participating SMEs are managed to improve their performance and productivity.
- 1.4 The programme was piloted in early 2018 initially with two Growth Hubs (Birmingham and Manchester) and a further two in September 2018 (North East and London). The primary function of the Growth Hubs was to facilitate the matching of mentees and mentors. There were c. 180 mentoring relationships across the pilot programme. BtB have an ambitious plan underway to scale up the programme, targeting 1,000 established mentoring relationships by March 2020. In July 2019, The Growth Company was appointed as the national delivery partner for scaling-up the MfG programme.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.5 SQW, with Belmana, was commissioned by BtB to undertake a process evaluation of the MfG programme – to assess the implementation of the programme and help inform its' scale up. The evaluation also aims to capture evidence of early effects on programme participants (i.e.

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<sup>1</sup> Bank of England, Productivity puzzles. Speech given by Andrew G Haldane, Chief Economist, Bank of England – 20 March 2017. See: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2017/productivity-puzzles>

<sup>2</sup> PLG members include: John Lewis Partnership, Confederation of Business Industry (CBI), Channel 4, BAE Systems, Rolls Royce, Siemens UK, GlaxoSmithKline, KPMG Global Financial Services, BT, Nestle UK and Ireland, Cisco, and the Institute of Directors (IoD).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bethebusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/how-good-is-your-business-really.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> HM Government, Business Productivity Review. November 2019.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/844506/business-productivity-review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/844506/business-productivity-review.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.growthco.uk/news/the-growth-company-appointed-national-delivery-partner-for-be-the-business-mentoring-for-growth-programme/>

mentees, mentors, and their respective organisations); and provide recommendations to inform the design of a future economic impact evaluation of the programme.

## Evaluation objectives and scope

- 1.6 The evaluation objectives focussed on the four headline evaluation questions (EQ) identified in Table 1-1. These were agreed following the scoping phase of the study.

**Table 1-1: Headline evaluation questions**

#	Evaluation questions
EQ1	How has the programme been delivered and how effective has this been against programme aims and objectives?
EQ2	What are the lessons from delivery to improve programme performance and inform the programme's scale up?
EQ3	What are the early benefits of the programme on participants?
EQ4	What are the recommendations to inform the design of a future economic impact evaluation of the programme?

*Source: Study Specification; SQW*

- 1.7 To complement the above, there were further questions to consider focussing on different aspects of delivery and areas for improvement (Table 1-2).

**Table 1-2: Complementary evaluation questions**

#	Evaluation questions
EQ5	What is the profile of businesses supported by MfG?
EQ6	What is the speed of selection / rejection process?
EQ7	Are the current mentee criteria fit for purpose? And are they understood by the Growth Hubs/SMEs?
EQ8	What is the best way of targeting SME Leaders and mentors and influencing them to join, and remain in, the MfG programme?
EQ9	What is the best way to encourage leading firms to supply their key talent as mentors to MfG?
EQ10	What constitutes a good mentor?
EQ11	What is the most effective mentor/mentee matching approach?
EQ12	Are there key criteria on the mentee and mentor profile forms to make a good match? What are they?
EQ13	What do the mentors/mentees require of an induction process for the programme - to get them off to a flying start? Is an induction process required?
EQ14	Is there a point in the SME journey when mentoring is more effective?
EQ15	Is there an optimal amount of mentoring?

*Source: Study Specification; SQW*

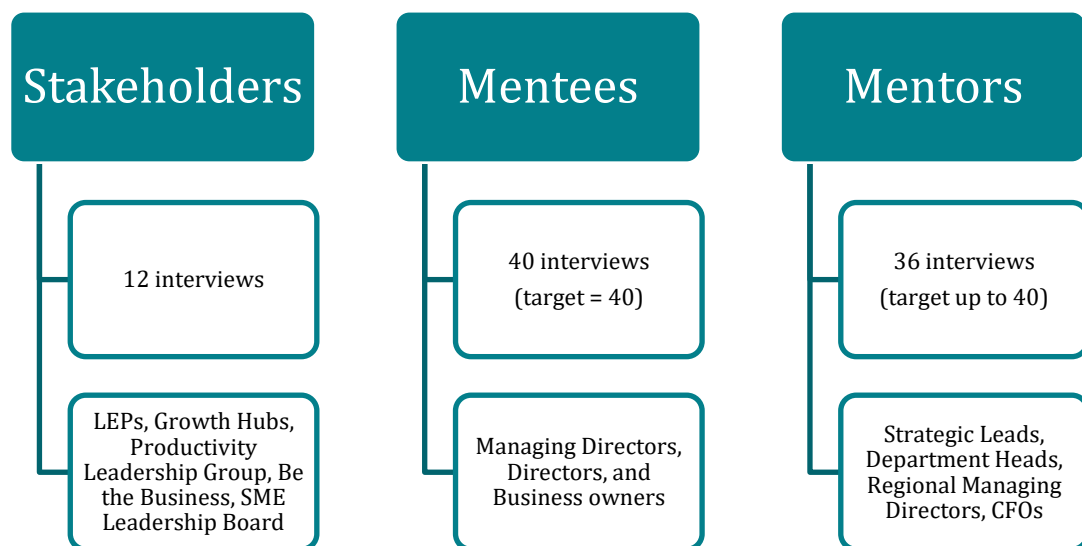
- 1.8 It is worth highlighting three key points in relation to the scope of the study. First, the focus was on assessing the delivery of the pilot programme including any learning to improve its' future performance in scaling up. Given this, capturing the early effects of the programme on

participants was of interest but not the primary purpose of the study.<sup>6</sup> Second, the scale up of the programme is currently underway with some changes and learning from the pilot already being implemented by Be the Business and The Growth Company. Therefore, the findings from this study, including the lessons for future development, should be interpreted in this ‘evolving’ context. Third, this was not an ‘audit’ of programme activities delivered by BtB and the four Growth Hubs but rather the emphasis was on ‘learning’ i.e. what worked well and less well. As indicated in the Study Specification, this was intended to be a “short sharp piece of work”, focusing on “what works”.

## Approach and research methods

- 1.9 Our overall approach to assessing the delivery of the MfG programme involved a theory-based assessment. This tested the extent to which programme delivery was in line with the updated logic model and theory of change set out in section 2.
- 1.10 The study involved an inception meeting with the client group, review of documentation and monitoring data, scoping discussions with key stakeholders, and design of research tools: separate interview topic guides for stakeholders, mentees and mentors, and an updated logic model and theory of change for the programme. This was followed by primary fieldwork, summarised in Figure 1-1. We also produced a short paper summarising the stakeholder feedback, presented emerging findings to the client group, and held a workshop with the Growth Hubs to test the emerging findings.

Figure 1-1: Primary research



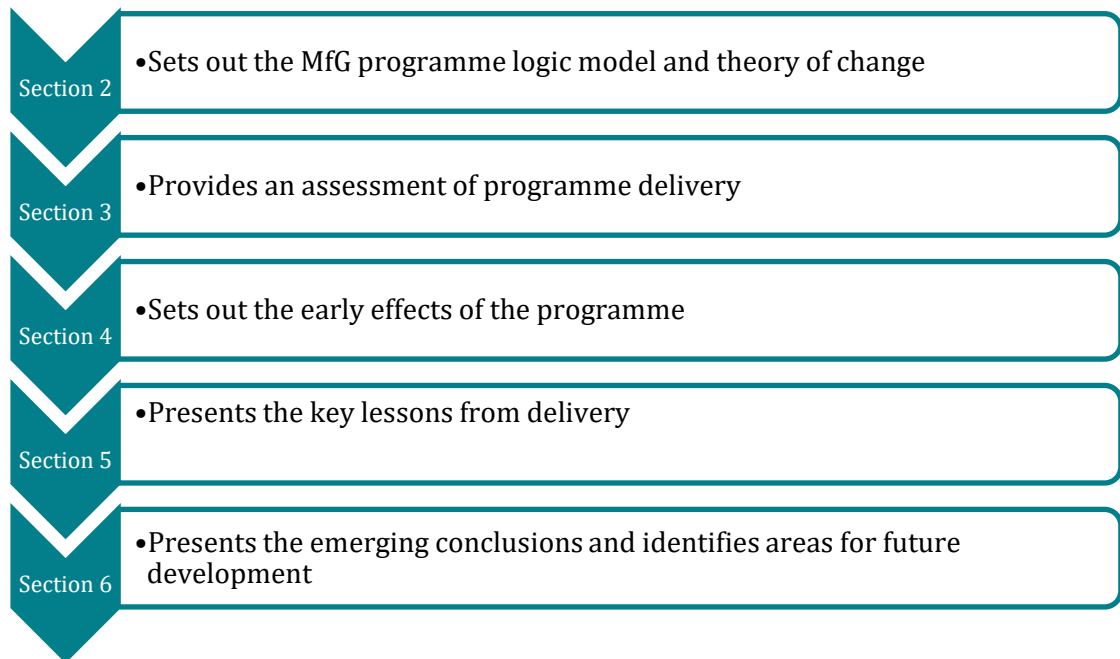
Source: SQW

<sup>6</sup> This is especially the case as some mentoring relationships were still underway or had recently ended at the time of the fieldwork for the study, resulting in a relatively short timeframe for effects to materialise for individuals and their organisations.



## Structure of this report

1.11 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:



1.12 There are two annexes: list of consultees interviewed; and case studies of 'paired' mentee and mentor relationships. In addition, our proposed approach for a future economic impact evaluation of the MfG programme has been provided separately to BtB.

## 2. Programme logic and theory of change

### Context and rationale

In economic terms, productivity is defined as the “*level of output per unit of input*”; and labour productivity is the “*quantity of goods and services produced per unit of labour input*”, for example per hour worked or per filled job (ONS, 2019).

Improving productivity across the economy is a national priority. Since the financial crisis (2008), the focus has been on addressing the productivity gap between the UK’s top- and bottom-performing companies (Bank of England, 2018). There is a ‘long tail’ of underperforming small businesses, that act as a drag on the rest of the economy (Industrial Strategy, 2017). This underperformance matters because productivity is the main determinant of national living standards in an economy – improving standard of living over time depends almost entirely on the ability to raise output per worker. A more productive economy can produce more goods and services, not by increasing inputs, but by making production more efficient.

The Productivity Leadership Group’s “How Good Is Your Business Really?” Report (2016) called for a business-led response to the UK’s productivity challenge. This identified improving SME management and leadership capability as the key to change. BtB’s MfG programme provides SMEs with high quality mentoring support from business leaders in top-tier firms (mentors). The overall objective of the programme is to improve productivity within mentee businesses by developing their management practices and leadership skills. It addresses key market failures and barriers relating to: information, capability, co-ordination, and positive externalities (i.e. spillover effects).

### Logic and theory of change

The MfG programme logic model and theory of change were reviewed and updated. This was informed by our scoping consultations and review of programme documentation.

The MfG pilot programme received input from BtB and four Growth Hubs involved in delivery: they provide staff, facilities and systems. The key activities include: marketing and promotion of the programme; recruitment and matching of mentees and mentors, management of paired mentoring relationships. These activities are expected to lead to outputs and outcomes for both mentees and mentors (primarily the former). Key expected outcomes for mentees include: increased awareness and knowledge of management and leadership practices; and improved skills (incl. soft skills such as trust and communication). It is expected that these individual effects translate into outcomes for mentee businesses through: adoption of management and leadership practices; and improved business performance. These are then expected to generate productivity impacts within mentee businesses.

There are also key outcomes for the programme overall: establishing a successful scaled up programme and a pool of good quality, pro-bono mentors with the right skills and capabilities (across sectors and geographies).

## Context and rationale

- 2.1 Improving productivity across the economy is now a key national policy priority. Since the financial crisis (2008), the focus has been on addressing the productivity gap between the UK's top- and bottom-performing companies (Bank of England, 2018).<sup>7</sup> There is a 'long tail' of underperforming small businesses, that act as a drag on the rest of the economy (Industrial Strategy, 2017).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, productivity performance varies within and between regions, cities and sectors (ONS, 2017).<sup>9</sup>
- 2.2 The Productivity Leadership Group's (PLG) "How Good Is Your Business Really?" Report (2016)<sup>10</sup> highlights the findings of the World Management Survey (WMS):<sup>11</sup> management practices are significantly higher in other countries such as USA, Japan and Germany; and management practices have a direct link with differences in productivity.<sup>12</sup>
- 2.3 The PLG Report called for a business-led response to the UK's productivity challenge. This identified improving SME management and leadership capability as the key to change.

*"That long tail [of underperforming businesses] is no coincidence: it reflects the fact that many British businesses are poor at adopting best management practice; that too few managers think long term about talent; that many rest content with current products and working practices, rather than seeking to innovate; and that British business sometimes focuses too much on short-term survival and success, at the expense of long-term value creation."*

- 2.4 MfG seeks to address key market failures and barriers to the SMEs' adoption of management and leadership practices that impact on their business performance and productivity:
- *Capability failures* – firms' lack of skills, resources, and absorptive capacity can hamper the potential for adopting/implementing management and leadership practices.
  - *Information failures* – where SMEs are not aware of the management and leadership expertise found in top-tier firms, and/or do not know where to go or how to access this expertise.
  - *Co-ordination failures* – there is a fragmented landscape of provision for business mentoring support in industry (i.e. not professional mentors) that prevents effective relationships between SMEs and top-tier firms.
  - *Positive externalities* – potential to generate positive spillover effects e.g. knowledge created by one firm that spills over into other firms, creating value for them and their customers; these spillovers are not factored into firms' decision making.

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<sup>7</sup> Bank of England, The UK's Productivity Problem: Hub No Spokes. Speech given by Andrew G Haldane, Chief Economist, Bank of England – 28 June 2018. <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2018/the-uks-productivity-problem-hub-no-spokes-speech-by-andy-haldane.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> UK Government (2017) Industrial Strategy - Building a Britain fit for the future.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> ONS (2017). Regional and sub-regional productivity in the UK.

<sup>10</sup> Productivity Leadership Group (2016) How good is your business really? Raising our ambitions for business performance. <https://www.bethebusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/how-good-is-your-business-really.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://worldmanagementsurvey.org/>

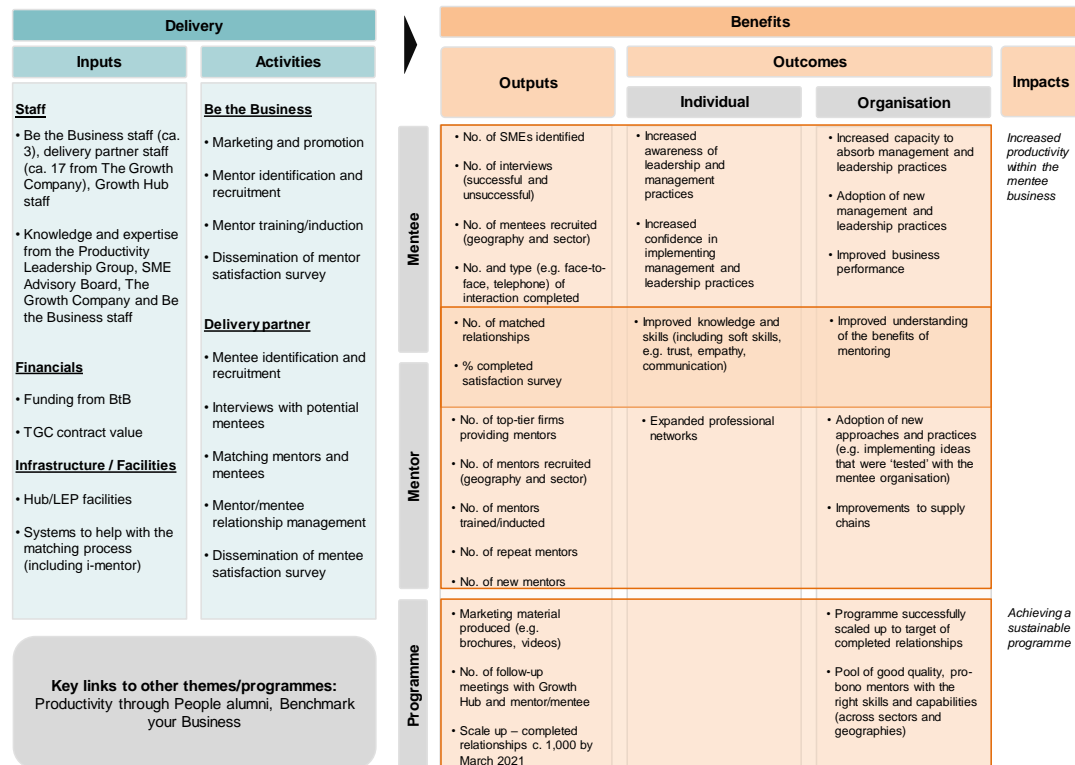
<sup>12</sup> Ibid 10.

- 2.5 Given the above context and rationale, the key objective of the programme is to improve productivity within mentee businesses by developing their management practices and leadership skills. This objective is enabled by:
- achieving scale across sectors and geography
  - achieving a sustainable programme
  - ensuring good quality, pro-bono mentors with the right skills and capabilities.

## Logic model and theory of change

- 2.6 The updated logic model for the MfG programme is presented in Figure 2-1. This sets out the delivery (i.e. inputs and activities) and expected benefits (i.e. outputs, outcomes, and impacts) of the programme. The inputs include: staff from BtB and the four Growth Hubs participating in the pilot; financial input from BtB; and infrastructure/ facilities provided by BtB and the Growth Hubs. The key activities include: marketing and promotion of the programme; recruitment and matching of mentees and mentors, management of paired mentoring relationship; and satisfaction surveys. These activities are expected to lead to outputs and outcomes for both mentees and mentors (primarily the former) and for their respective organisations.
- 2.7 The outcomes for the individual mentee include: increased awareness of management and leadership practices; improved knowledge and skills (incl. soft skills, such as trust, empathy, communication); and expanded professional networks. These individual effects are expected to translate into outcomes for their organisations through, for example: adoption of management and leadership practices; improved understanding of the benefits of mentoring; and improved business performance. There are also programme-level outcomes: a successful scaled up programme and a pool of good quality, pro-bono mentors with the right skills and capabilities (across sectors and geographies). The range of outcomes, in particular the adoption of management and leadership practices, are expected to generate productivity impacts within mentee businesses, and ensure the programme is sustainable going forward.
- 2.8 The important point to note is that this logic model approach provides the structure for assessing the programme. It helps to establish what progress has been made and how. To put it another way, it examines how the programme in theory was intended to be delivered against how it has borne out in practice (and what can be learned?).

Figure 2-1: Mentoring for Growth programme



Source: SQW, BtB

2.9 The theory of change described above is underpinned by a number of key assumptions relating to the delivery and effects of the programme, as summarised in Table 2-1. These assumptions have informed the design of our research tools and subsequent discussions with mentees, mentors, and stakeholders.

Table 2-1: Key assumptions underpinning the theory of change

Delivery	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is sufficient supply of high-quality mentors and demand from mentees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The programme is able to attract and retain high quality mentors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teams at BtB and The Growth Company are sufficient to manage the operational demand and scale up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentors from top-tier companies are high quality</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is marketing, evaluation and central coordination support for the programme at BtB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is possible to transfer and apply learnings from large corporations to SMEs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships are effective and with the right organisations (including delivery providers and PLC/PLG relationships)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The programme is able to engage SMEs that are not aware of the leadership and management expertise found in top-tier firms, and/or do not know where to go or how to access this expertise.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The programme has a scalable operating model and infrastructure</li> </ul>	

Source: SQW; BtB

### 3. Key findings of programme delivery

The pilot programme was delivered in partnership with four Growth Hubs: Birmingham, Manchester, North East and London. The pilot programme supported c. 180 SMEs from across the four Growth Hub areas. They mainly operated in manufacturing or wholesale and retail sectors. Mentors were provided to the pilot by 14 organisations from the PLG. The assessment of programme delivery is primarily based on the *customer experience*.

#### Effectiveness and efficiency of delivery

The mentee and mentor consultations found that the programme delivery was effective and efficient overall: most mentees and mentors rated the quality of the overall delivery of the programme as at least four out of five; most mentees would recommend the programme to other SME leaders; and nearly all mentors intended to remain in the programme. We highlight two specific aspects of delivery as working well.

- **Recruitment** – mentees and mentors completed profile application forms and interviews as part of the recruitment process. These were well regarded by both mentees and mentors interviewed. All of them understood what was expected of them and most felt that the timeline for recruitment had been communicated to them.
- **Matching** – the recruitment was seen to have facilitated high-quality matching by the Growth Hubs in terms of personality, expertise and experience. Mentee evidence indicated that personal chemistry within the MfG relationship was an important enabling factor for individual and organisational mentee benefits (see section 4).

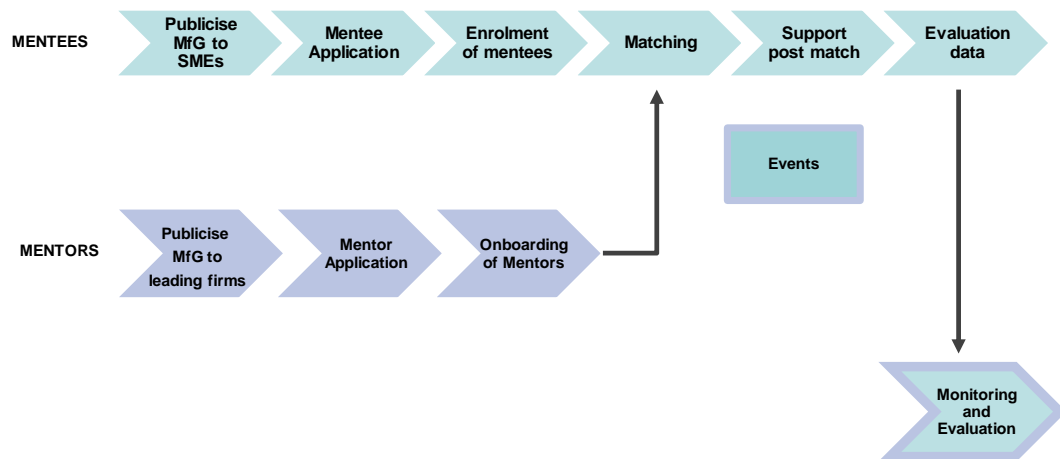
In summary, the evaluation found the MfG programme had delivered activities as expected against the programme logic model and theory of change (see section 2). The activities were aligned with the rationale for the programme to develop management and leadership practices of mentee businesses. The activities were appropriate and relevant in addressing market failures and barriers.

- 3.1 This section reviews how the pilot programme was delivered and how effective this has been. It provides an overview of programme delivery including profiles of mentees and mentors, and their motivations for participating. This is followed by an assessment of the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the programme which includes review of key aspects of delivery, including: marketing and awareness, recruitment, and matching. The evidence draws on our review of key programme documentation, and consultations with mentees, mentors, Growth Hubs and stakeholders. It is important to highlight that our assessment is predominantly based on the *customer experience perspective*.

## Overview of programme delivery

3.2 Figure 3-1 depicts the customer journey for mentees and mentors as indicated by Be the Business. Figure 3-2 further details programme delivery by highlighting the roles of Be the Business and The Growth Company – this is based on our understanding of the pilot.<sup>13</sup>

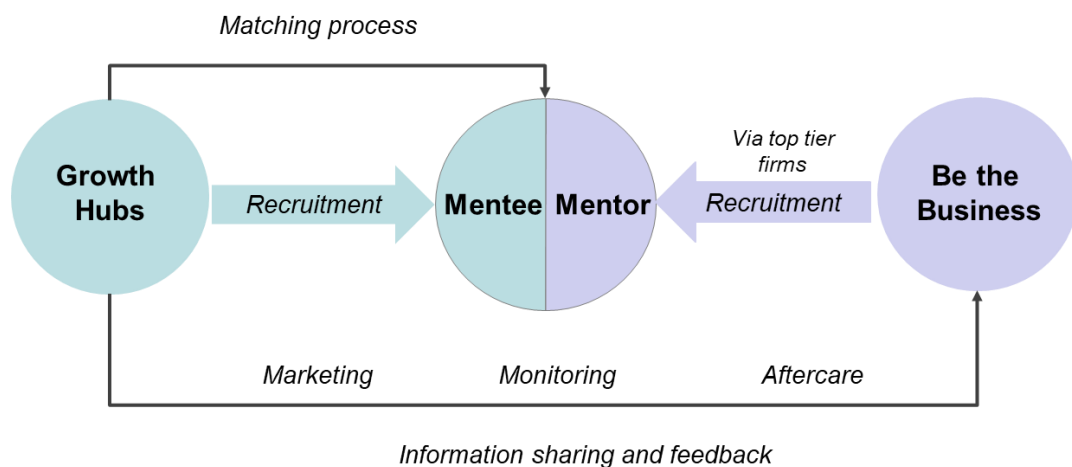
**Figure 3-1: Overview of Mentoring for Growth programme delivery**



Source: Be the Business

3.3 The pilot programme was delivered in partnership with four Growth Hubs: Birmingham, Manchester, North East and London. We understand the marketing activity for the pilot was limited and *ad hoc*: Be the Business raised awareness with prospective mentor organisations through PLG contacts building interest in the programme and Growth Hubs promoted it to SMEs in conjunction with other support they delivered. Mentors were recruited to the programme by Be the Business from organisations in the Productivity Leadership Group. Once recruited, mentors completed a profile form that captured data on their motivations for joining the programme, sector, specialisms and their mentoring preferences (type of business, time commitment and number of mentees).

**Figure 3-2: Overview of Be the Business and The Growth Company roles in MfG delivery**



Source: SQW

<sup>13</sup> Informed by our review of programme documentation and consultations.

- 3.4 The programme’s eligibility criteria for mentee organisations varied slightly between Growth Hub areas for the pilot. Most Growth Hubs recruited mentees from SMEs with an annual turnover of £2m+ and staff between 10 and 250.<sup>14</sup> However, the London Growth Hub agreed lower level criteria with Be the Business.<sup>15</sup> Mentees completed a more detailed profile form than mentors, which captured basic profile information (e.g. gender, ethnicity), growth ambitions, support required and their mentoring preferences (see Table 3-1 for full list).

**Table 3-1: Mentee data collected in application profile form**

Data	Detail
Mentee profile	Name, title/role, ethnicity, gender
Business details	Age, address, number of employees, annual turnover, wage costs, net profit, business activities, ownership details
Business ambitions	Projected job creation, wage costs and projected profit, mentee vision for growth; productivity objectives, foreseeable barriers / challenges
Programme expectations	Areas of support required, preferred type of mentor, travel preferences
Contact details	Phone number, mobile, email, company website, company Facebook page, LinkedIn profile, Twitter handle.

*Source: Be the Business*

- 3.5 The Hubs collated the information from mentor and mentee profile forms to make a match. Where necessary, the Growth Hubs had additional telephone consultations with mentees to get more detail. This process was completed manually by Growth Hub advisors. Once matched, mentors and mentees were sent feedback forms from Be the Business and the Growth Hubs respectively. The Growth Hubs provided some post-match support. This included the following activities by The Growth Company: surveys at three, six and nine months; and invites to relevant events. That said, consultation evidence from mentees and mentors indicated that there were no fixed post-match communication or aftercare procedures in place by Be the Business or Growth Hubs to maintain relationships with mentors or mentees. Where it did occur, consultees reported that this was ad hoc and required good relationships with either the Growth Hub (e.g. via an existing relationship with a Growth Hub Advisor) or Be the Business (e.g. via membership to the PLG).
- 3.6 It is important to highlight that a standardised post-match communication approach has been implemented by The Growth Company for the programme’s scale up.

### **Profile of beneficiaries<sup>16</sup>**

#### **Mentees<sup>17</sup>**

- 3.7 We matched the monitoring data for 122 mentee businesses to the Fame database (2019) to get a profile of the mentee population.<sup>18</sup> The number of matches varied across geographies

<sup>14</sup> This was standardised as the national eligibility criteria for the programme scale up.

<sup>15</sup> See Table 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> SQW was not provided data for beneficiaries in the North East LEP areas so the population profile is based on those mentored in Birmingham, London and Manchester.

<sup>17</sup> Data presented here are from Fame database (2019) using the list of mentee business names provided to SQW by Be the Business.

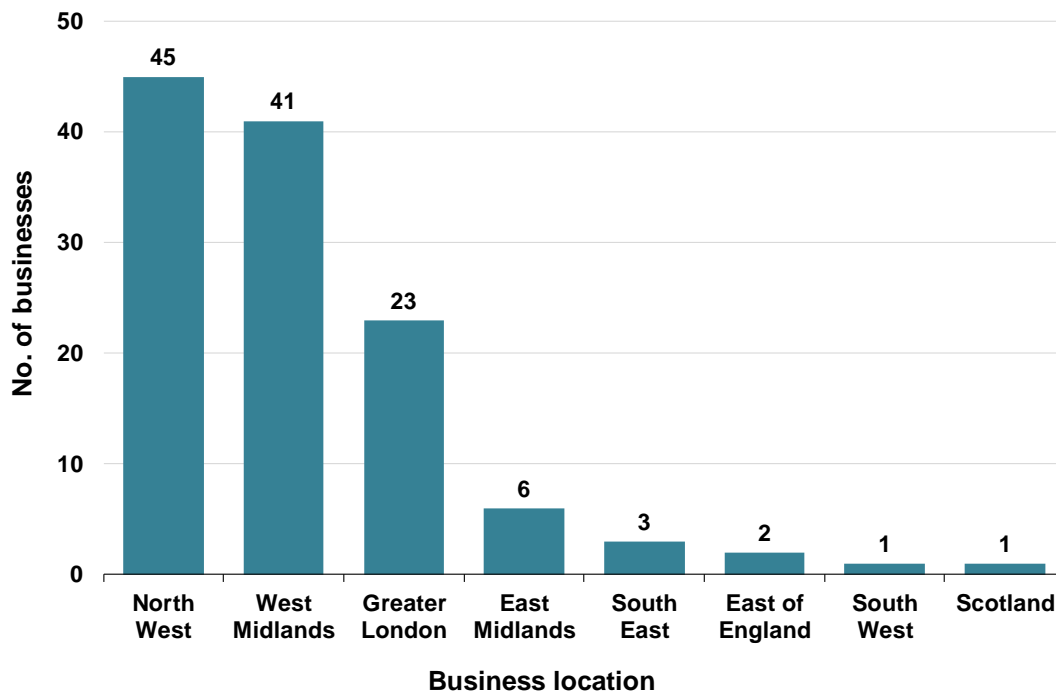
<sup>18</sup> FAME (Financial Analysis Made Easy) contains information for companies in UK and Ireland.

<https://www.bvdinfo.com/en-gb/our-products/data/national/fame>



(Figure 3-3): most relationships were brokered in Manchester (45), Birmingham and the Midlands (47) and Greater London (23).

**Figure 3-3: Profile of mentee population, geography (n=122)**



Source: FAME data (2019)

3.8 The businesses supported under MfG tended to be smaller, with fewer than 100 FTE (Table 3-2). However, the programme also supported businesses at the top and bottom SME range. The data available on company turnover suggests that mentee organisations generated an annual turnover of £5m+. However, the data were very limited and should be treated as indicative rather than representative.

**Table 3-2: Profile of mentee population, business size**

Turnover	No. of businesses (n=21)	No. of employees (FTEs)	No. of businesses (n=88)
Less than £2m	1	Less than 10	20
£2m up to £5m	0	10-49	39
£5m up to £10m	9	50-99	19
£10m up to £20m	10	100-249	9
£20m+	1	250+	1

Source: FAME data (2019)

3.9 The mentee population covered a broad range of sectors, but over half were operating in the manufacturing and wholesale and retail sectors (Table 3-3).

**Table 3-3: Profile of mentee population, business sector (n=119)**

Sector	No. of businesses
Manufacturing	42
Wholesale and retail trade	25
Professional scientific and technical activities	14
Information and communication	13
Administrative and support services	10
Construction	5
Financial and insurance activities	3
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2
Education	2
Health and social care	1
Transportation and storage	1
Water supply; sewerage; waste management and remediation activities	1

Source: FAME data (2019)

### Mentors

3.10 Programme mentors were provided by 14 'top-tier' organisations (see Figure 3-4). Over half of mentors came from John Lewis Partnership (19), BAE Systems (17), McKinsey & Company (17), GSK (16), Accenture (10) and Amazon (10). It is worth noting that members of the PLG were the main source of mentors for the pilot programme (see evaluation sample).

**Figure 3-4: Organisations providing mentors to the Mentoring for Growth pilot programme**



Source: SQW

- 3.11 The positive work of the PLG in recruiting for the pilot was widely recognised by stakeholders and mentors. However, the majority of stakeholders and some mentees expressed concerns that solely relying on this approach may become an issue when scaling up the programme. For example, in the view of one consultee: *“the programme needs to find an established route to mentors if it’s going to meet its growth targets”*. One Growth Hub explained that the small number of mentoring organisations had led to a narrow pool of mentors. In practice, this had made it difficult to make matches for SME leaders who operated in sectors not represented by the PLG and required sector-specific support. This view on the narrow pool of mentors was not applicable across all Growth Hub areas – according to The Growth Company this was not an issue in Greater Manchester.

## Evaluation sample

### Mentees

- 3.12 We interviewed 40 MfG beneficiaries across three Growth Hub areas: Manchester, London and Birmingham. Mentee consultees were senior decision makers (see Figure 1-1). Their SME organisations ranged in size: most had generated between £2m and £20m turnover in the last year (24) and tended to be on the smaller end of the SME spectrum, employing fewer than 50 FTE staff (Table 3-4). Now the criteria of £2m turnover and 10 FTE has been set nationally for the scale up, four mentee organisations would no longer eligible for the MfG programme (see highlighted row). SMEs that fall short of at least one criterion can be enrolled on the programme if approved by The Growth Company’s, Skills and Talent lead and Be the Business.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 3-4: Profile of mentee consultees, business size (n=40)**

Turnover	No. of businesses	No. of employees (FTEs)	No. of businesses
Less than £2m	3	Less than 10	1
£2m up to £5m	10	10-49	20
£5m up to £10m	8	50-99	7
£10m up to £20m	6	100-249	8
£20m+	1	250+	1
Did not answer	12	Did not answer	3

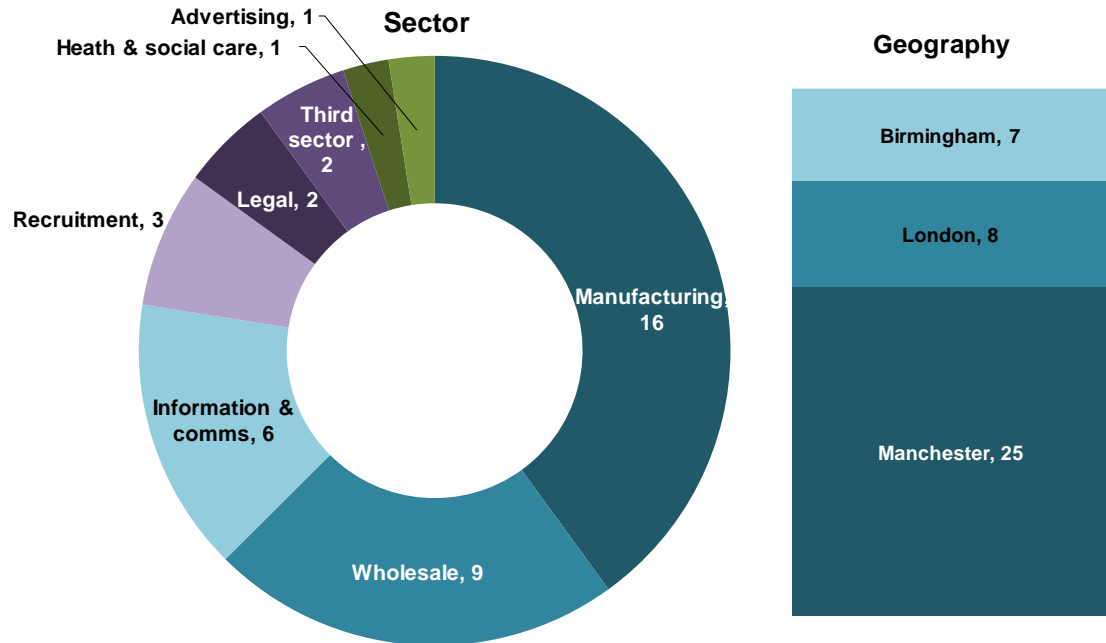
Source: SQW

- 3.13 The geographic and sectoral spread of the sample broadly reflected the beneficiary population set out above (see Figure 3-3). Most mentee SMEs in our consultee sample were from Manchester (25) and the most represented sectors were manufacturing (16) and wholesale and retail (9) as shown in Figure 3-5.

<sup>19</sup> Mentoring for Growth Process Map Eligibility Escalation (002) – Be the Business.

3.14 The businesses consulted for this study varied in age: around half had been established since 2000 but there were also examples of older, family businesses that had been in operation for over 100 years.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 3-5: Profile of mentee consultees, sector and geography (n=40)**



Source: SQW

3.15 **Mentees received support from their mentor in more than one area of their business.**<sup>21</sup> This flexibility was valued by mentees: they appreciated that the support could be tailored to their needs at a given moment, not just their needs at the time of application. MfG relationships most commonly included support for SME leaders with their business planning (38), ranging from focussed guidance (e.g. support transforming a business model, developing a marketing strategy for a new sector or defining company values) to developing business plans, covering a range of internal processes. In all but one case, business planning support was delivered in combination with guidance on employee engagement, business development, performance management, leadership or personal development. Examples of MfG support in practice are detailed in Table 3-5.

<sup>20</sup> 19 mentees worked in organisations that had been established since 2000, 12 worked for SMEs that were founded in 1900 or sooner and 4 predated 1900. Five did not answer this question.

<sup>21</sup> This paragraph and Table 3-5 are based on mentee responses to Q2. Area of support provided by mentor and Q18. What did you do with your mentor?

**Table 3-5: Areas of support provided by mentors (n=40)**

Type of support	Examples	N
Business planning	Transformation process from a single ownership to a partnership model; developing a business plan to move into a new sector; improvements to production line; new marketing strategy; overseas business expansion (e.g. how to establish a consistent business culture across different geographies/cultures); implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system	38
Employee engagement	Retention strategies (e.g. approaches to incentivising staff); introduction of appraisal processes; overview of pay structures; clarity of progression routes	21
Performance management	Addressing complex dynamics in family-owned businesses; streamlining organisational structure; redefining staff roles; establishing feedback procedures; defining a measure of productivity	13
Leadership	Stakeholder management; gaining respect from employees; developing relationship with board members	12
Personal development	Management style advice (e.g. clear, trusting, open); sharing of documentation from mentors' organisation (e.g. presentation style guides, quality assurance manual)	10
Business development	Business partner buy-out; product development (e.g. bundles of popular products); expanding networks	7
Other	Site visits to mentors' offices, factories and warehouses.	10

Source: SQW; NB: Categories overlap

- 3.16 **The status of the mentoring relationships varied: they were either ongoing (18), completed (19) or, in three cases, the status was unclear.** Relationships had either come to an end once the relationship had been live for 12 months, or when the mentor and mentee agreed that the relationship's aims had been met (e.g. the business partner buy-out was complete or a new export strategy had been finalised). Six mentees reported that their relationship had ended prematurely due to difficulties contacting their mentor, either because communication had 'fizzled out' or mentors had changed organisation. In these cases, mentees were not sure how to re-engage with the programme for a new match. Two examples where mentees were unsure of the status of their MfG relationship are given in the box below. We highlight that these examples are isolated events and not reflective of the programme overall.

#### **MENTEE PERSPECTIVE**

*One mentee applied to MfG when their business was undergoing substantial change: the longstanding Managing Director had recently retired, creating unrest amongst employees, especially the senior leadership team. Their JLP mentor gave them "gentle pointers" for different approaches until they felt confident enough to move forward alone. **The mentee was sure they could reach out to their mentor for future support if they needed to.***

*A different mentee felt well matched to their mentor in terms of experience: they had faced similar business issues in the past. During the programme, the mentor was promoted to a new role meaning they had less time to commit to the relationship. The mentee had tried to contact the mentor at several 'crisis' points but was turned away by their PA. The mentee has not followed up with the mentor, Be the Business or the Growth Hub since. **They did not know who to turn to for support.***

## Mentors

- 3.17 Our evaluation also included consultations with 36 MfG mentors from thirteen of the mentoring organisations.<sup>22</sup> The spread of mentors across these organisations reflected the overall population: over half of those consulted were from John Lewis Partnership, GSK or BAE systems.<sup>23</sup> Two mentors were current or former Be the Business employees. The mentor pool comprised individuals in mid- to high- ranking positions across a breadth of business functions. Their roles included strategic leads for specific sectors and geographies, department heads, CFOs and regional Managing Directors.

## Mentee motivations

- 3.18 **The MfG programme was perceived by SMEs to be unique in the business support landscape.** Mentees liked that the programme was based on real-world business expertise: “it’s for businesses, by businesses”. The strongest motivating factor for mentees to apply to MfG was the opportunity to be mentored by someone from a top tier firm (Figure 3-6) Mentees would not have otherwise had access to “blue-chip” companies’ expertise through other provision. The second most cited motivation was the programme’s endorsement from the Growth Hub. Mentees trusted that the Growth Hub understood their business needs and therefore were making an informed recommendation of the programme. Other motivating factors included the programme’s specific focus on SMEs, the diversity of sectors represented in the mentor pool and a lack of awareness of other mentoring programmes.

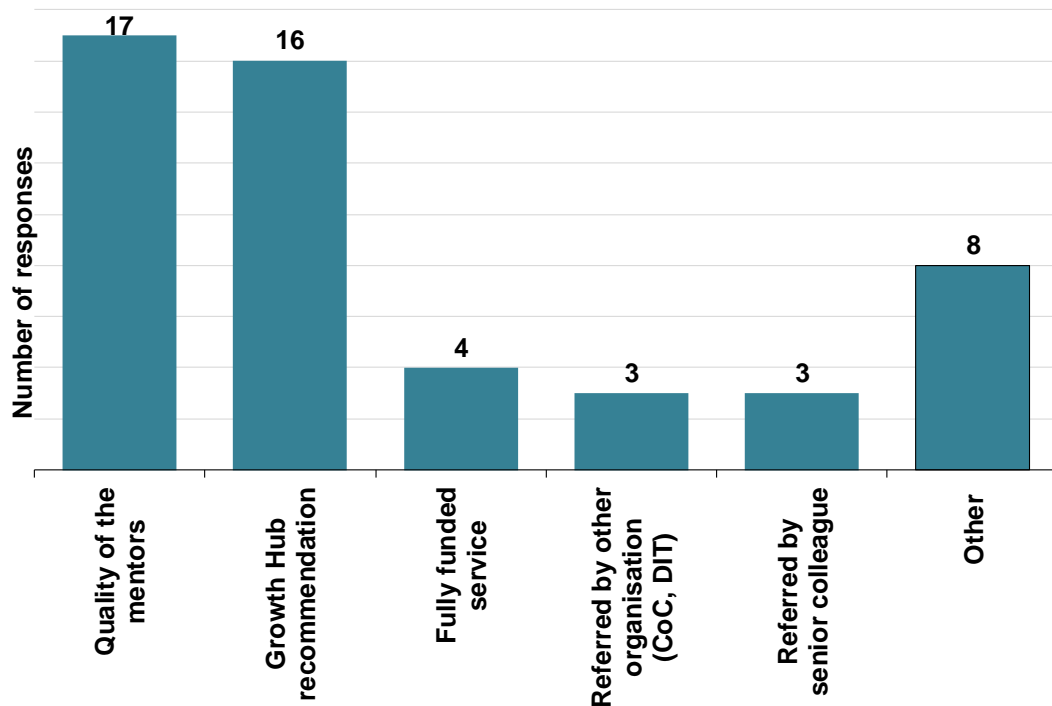
### MENTEE PERSPECTIVE

*The Managing Director of a law firm was drawn to MfG because it was **business-led and free**. In the past, they had received paid-for coaching and mentoring from the Growth Hub. The coaching had not been objective: it took a long time, at great cost, for actions to be finalised. In contrast, the Growth Hub mentoring was unbiased but lacked genuine business knowledge*

<sup>22</sup> No mentors from SIG were interviewed by SQW for this study.

<sup>23</sup> Our sample of mentors comprised employees from JLP (8), GSK (7), BAE Systems (5), Siemens (3), Cisco (2), Accenture (2), McKinsey & Company (2), Be the Business (1) AstraZeneca (1), KPMG (1), Amazon (1), EY (1), Mahabis (1) and TPG Engineering (1).

Figure 3-6: Why did you choose to apply to MfG specifically? (Mentees, n=40)



Source: SQW

3.19 Mentees considered the programme’s mentoring support as appropriate in addressing their business issues. There was no clear consensus amongst consultees on the reasons for this view. A few examples of the reasons are as follows. The fully funded offer was perceived as a “neutral service” by four mentees who were previously sceptical about the trustworthiness of paid-for-mentors (see example). In addition, mentees considered MfG to be appropriate because it provided them with an opportunity to learn from the mentor’s experience (5); it offered tailored support that they would otherwise find difficult to access (3); and it was more personal than training (2). Less than one third of consultees had been mentored before, either by senior colleagues, independent consultants or other organisations (e.g. the Growth Hub, The Alternative Board<sup>24</sup>).<sup>25</sup> Consultation evidence suggested that the programme’s design (by businesses for businesses) and the Growth Hubs’ endorsement may have motivated some SMEs to consider mentoring that otherwise would not have.

3.20 **In the early stages of the pilot programme, commitment to MfG from mentors came at the organisational level.** Stakeholder evidence suggested that organisational commitment came very quickly (via members of the PLG) but it often took time to trickle down to the mentors themselves. Mentor and stakeholder consultation evidence suggested that mentors were more able to commit time to their relationship if their employer had bought into the initiative. This is an important point to note for the recruitment of mentors. In the cases where mentors had mentored more than one SME,<sup>26</sup> their motivations shifted between their first and second relationships from “a favour to a colleague” to individual reasons (discussed in the next paragraph).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.thealternativeboard.co.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> 36 mentees responded to the question “Have you been mentored prior to being involved in the programme?”, 25 had not been mentored and 11 had

<sup>26</sup> 10 mentors mentored two mentees and 3 had mentored three mentees.

- 3.21 **Mentors were equally motivated to join MfG for personal development and altruistic reasons**<sup>27</sup>. Mentors had more experience of mentoring than mentees and tended to think of it as a process of mutual learning;<sup>28</sup> for over half, the programme was an opportunity to develop skills, gain confidence to pursue non-executive roles or to better understand businesses in the supply chain (18). As one mentor explained – “when you’ve been working in the industry for a long time, you just end up talking to the same people about the same things.” Mentors also saw the programme as an opportunity to “give back” to British industry (18), mirroring Be the Business’ overall objective.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.22 Having profiled the mentors and mentees we now assess the effectiveness of MfG overall and in terms of key stages of delivery: marketing and promotion, recruitment and matching.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of delivery

*Overall, mentees and mentors were satisfied with the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of programme delivery*

- 3.23 **Most mentees would recommend the programme unreservedly to other SME leaders;**<sup>30</sup> and all but five mentors intended to remain in the programme.<sup>31</sup> There was broad agreement amongst mentees and mentors that the quality of the programme delivery was good: the majority scored it four or more out of five (Figure 3-7). The process was seen to be well-defined and consultees did not report any gaps in the stages of the delivery model, from recruitment to matching, however, there was demand for feedback mechanisms. Where scoring was less than five, consultees were asked to identify areas for improvement to delivery. All factors identified linked to the lack of communication, from Be the Business and the Growth Hubs, to mentors and mentees throughout the process.
- 3.24 Stakeholders reported that the programme had been reasonably effective at meeting its overall objective: most were able to provide anecdotal evidence of MfG mentoring relationships leading to improved business outcomes. In contrast, mentors and mentees found it difficult to comment on the overall programme’s performance. This is unsurprising given all mentees, and most mentors (21), had only had one MfG relationship. Despite this, mentees and mentors were confident that the programme would ultimately lead to improvements to management and leadership practices in their mentoring relationships, and ultimately improvements in business productivity (see Section 4).
- 3.25 **Overall programme delivery was perceived as “very” efficient by most mentees (23).**<sup>32</sup> The main reasons for this high rating related to the timeliness of recruitment and matching by the Growth Hubs. The information required from mentees was gathered promptly and mentees were connected with their mentors in reasonable time – all consultees emphasised that the matching process was the most important “step” of the programme and appreciated

<sup>27</sup> 35 mentors responded to the question “Why did you want to become a mentor on the programme?”

<sup>28</sup> 29 mentors had previously mentored whereas only 11 mentees had experience of being mentored.

<sup>29</sup> Be the Business aims to “help every firm in the country improve their own performance, and the performance of those they work with” ([www.bethebusiness.com](http://www.bethebusiness.com)) 2019.

<sup>30</sup> 25 out of 36 mentees answered “10” to the question “On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend the MfG programme to others (potential mentees), where 0 is where you would not recommend the programme at all, and 10 is where you would recommend them unreservedly?” 4 mentees did not answer this question.

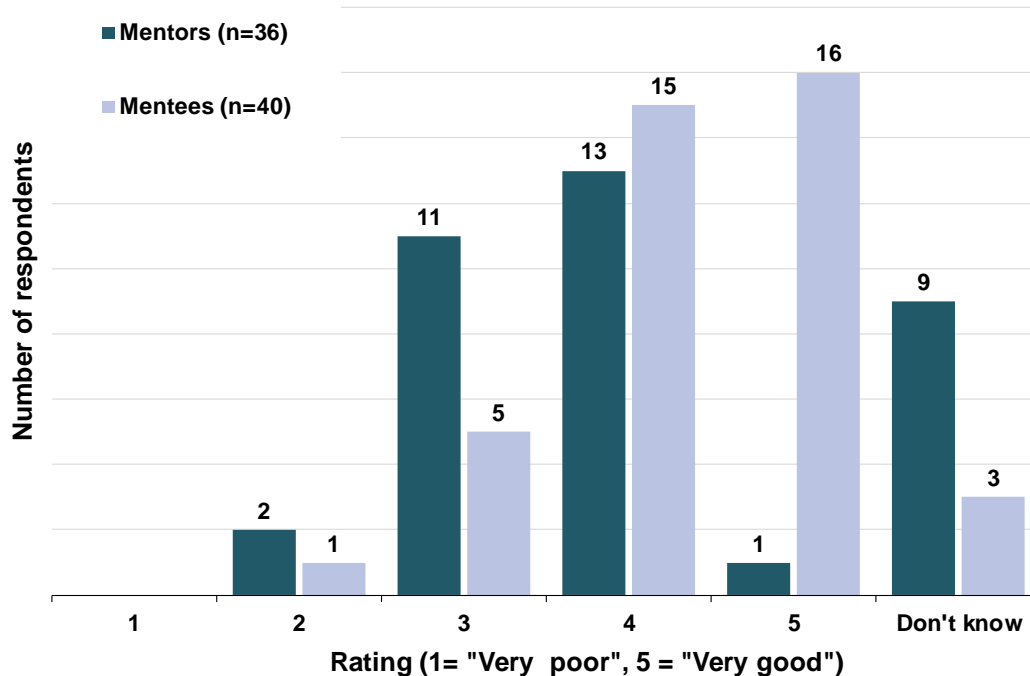
<sup>31</sup> 20 out of 26 mentors answered “yes” to the question “Do you intend to remain in the programme and continue to mentor more SMEs?”, 5 mentors answered “no” and one mentor was “unsure”.

<sup>32</sup> 35 mentees responded to the question “Do you feel the overall delivery of the programme was efficient?”



that it took time for Growth Hubs to make a considered match. It is likely that this view was influenced by the high overall satisfaction with the quality of the mentor-mentee match reported in later in this section.

Figure 3-7: How would you rate the quality of the overall delivery of the programme?



Source: SQW

### Marketing and awareness

- 3.26 **The MfG pilot programme had very limited marketing activity because there was no allocated marketing budget.** Stakeholder evidence suggested that this was due to the pilot's limited total budget and because it was not designed to market a large audience at the pilot stage. As outlined in paragraph 3.3, promotional activity was *ad hoc*: Be the Business raised awareness with mentors through the PLG's existing network. Almost all mentors had been recruited to the programme through their own organisation, either by an email asking for volunteers or by request of a senior colleague (30).<sup>33</sup> The approach to engaging mentors was deemed to be optimal by stakeholders. It aligned with Be the Business' aim to form strategic partnerships with organisations, who then provide mentors to the programme.<sup>34</sup>
- 3.27 In contrast, mentee engagement was highlighted as an area for improvement by stakeholders and mentees. **Mentees had very limited awareness of any wider marketing and promotional activities of the programme.**<sup>35</sup> Two-thirds of mentees were recruited to the programme via a Growth Hub (26).<sup>36</sup> Five mentees became aware of MfG through another organisation (e.g. Department for International Trade, Chamber of Commerce) or business event. Growth Hubs had requested resource to improve awareness and stimulate demand.

<sup>33</sup> 35 mentors were asked "How did you become aware of the programme"/ "How were you recruited as a mentor?"

<sup>34</sup> Mentoring for Growth process flow, Be the Business 6/11/2019.

<sup>35</sup> 7 mentees reported being aware of wider marketing and promotional activities.

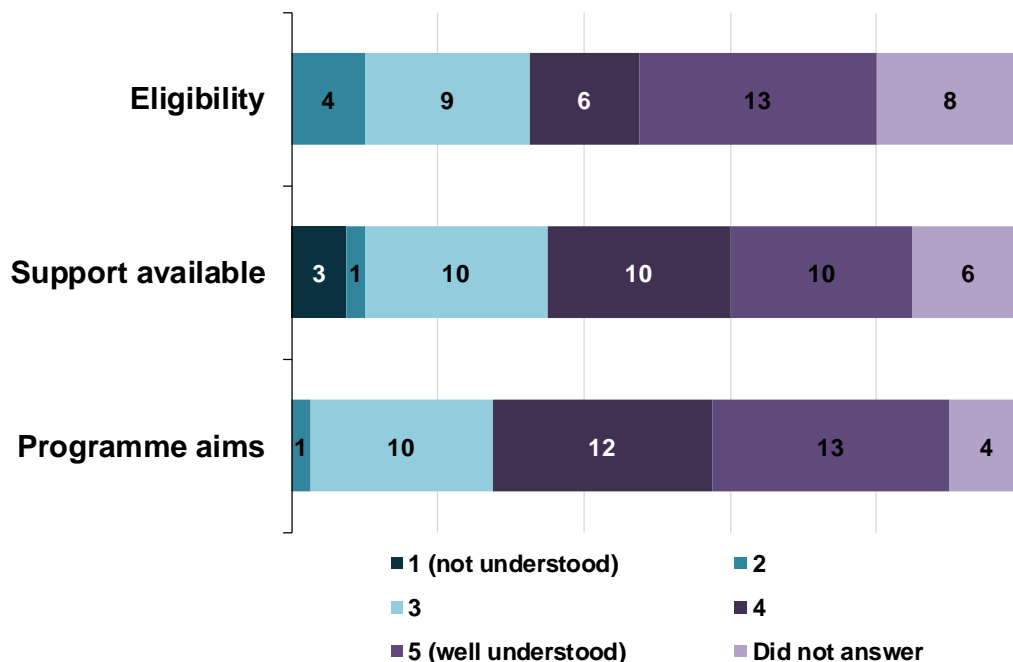
<sup>36</sup> 37 mentees responded to the question "How did you first become aware of the MfG programme?"

- 3.28 This activity was reflected in our consultation evidence. This aligns with the Be the Business' overarching recruitment approach, which seeks to form strategic partnerships with organisations, who then provide mentors to the programme.
- 3.29 Both groups of consultees offered suggestions on how best to reach the programme's target demographic. Mentors recommended that Be the Business utilise existing networks (e.g. North West Aerospace Alliance, British Retail Consortium) and target organisations, rather than potential mentors – company-level commitment is an important prerequisite to individual mentors being able to participate. Mentees reported that direct marketing is most effective with SMEs: six recommended targeted social media adverts (especially via LinkedIn and Facebook) that were tailored to businesses' location and sector.<sup>37</sup>

### Recruitment

- 3.30 From the outset, mentees were generally informed of the programme aims, support and eligibility: most rated their understanding as four+ out of five (Figure 3-8). Mentees attributed the clarity of all three elements to the quality of their interactions with the Growth Hub advisors and the programme's simple offer – SMEs at any development stage were able to apply for support on a range of business issues. Recruitment to MfG by the Growth Hubs was often seen by mentees as verification that its aims were aligned with their business need and they were eligible for support. In these cases, there was little motivation for the individuals to research the programme in more detail.

Figure 3-8: To what extent did you clearly understand the following at the outset, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not understood and 5 is well understood? Mentees (n=40)



Source: SQW

- 3.31 In a minority of cases, mentees did not understand the programme at the outset. Reasons for this included: limited time to fully research the programme, mentees did not personally

<sup>37</sup> 6 mentees suggested using social media to better reach SME leaders.

complete the application (e.g. completed by HR team or the LEP) or that there was little or no interaction with alumni mentees and mentors to illustrate the support available.

- 3.32 **The programme did not have a formal rejection process for unsuccessful mentees.** Growth Hubs did not “reject” any businesses from the programme, rather they signposted businesses onto more suitable support. There were no cases where prospective mentees came to the Growth Hubs wanting specifically to apply to MfG. This is unsurprising given the generally low awareness of promotional activities, high proportion of mentees becoming aware of the programme via Growth Hubs and lack of marketing collateral. According to stakeholder consultations, Be the Business did not have a rejection process in place for mentors. However, the Growth Hubs did not accept all referred mentors onto the programme. Mentors were interviewed by Growth Hub advisors and at the end of which a decision was made if they were appropriate to be a mentor. If not, this was fed back to Be the Business who would then have a conversation with and provide feedback to the individual.

#### *Profile form and interview*

- 3.33 **The first two stages (profile form and interview) of the MfG recruitment process were well regarded by mentees and mentors.** All consultees understood what was expected of them and most felt that the timeline for the recruitment process had been clearly communicated to them.<sup>38</sup> The guidelines for the frequency and duration of mentoring relationships was clearly articulated but four mentees felt unsure how the process should end.
- 3.34 The profile forms were generally regarded as: “*clear*” – individuals understood what was expected of them; “*worthwhile*” – they helped mentees to articulate their aims and clarify expectations; and “*fit for purpose*” – the forms collected the right level of detail for the Growth Hubs to be able to make an appropriate match. The follow up call with the Growth Hubs (interestingly, seen as an interview by mentees, but a discussion by mentors) varied depending on the individual: some were “*brief and straightforward*” whereas others were more “*in-depth and substantive*”. The Growth Hubs reported that this two-step approach was crucial to ensuring a high-quality match.

#### *Mentor induction*

- 3.35 Mentors were also offered an induction by Be the Business: most consultees had either attended the programme’s launch event in Birmingham or dialled into a webinar call. There were mixed views on the usefulness of these activities depending on levels of mentoring experience. Demand for an induction was limited amongst experienced mentors, who either did not feel they needed an induction or thought the current induction offer was sufficient. Conversely, less experienced mentors reported feeling under-prepared when starting their MfG relationship. For them, the induction activities were a “*good starting point*” but they would have valued additional support and information on the role of a mentor and how mentoring should work in practice.

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<sup>38</sup> 8 mentees and 6 mentors did not feel the timelines were clearly communicated to them.

## Matching

- 3.36 **The matching process for the pilot programme was “time consuming” for Be the Business and Growth Hubs.** Prospective mentees and mentors were asked to fill in profile forms by hand and the data collected were shared between Be the Business and Growth Hubs. The data sharing process was onerous for both parties: stakeholders reported that the two organisations were using incompatible systems and it took time for mentor organisations to source mentors and provide contact details. This meant it took a long time to share information – a business could agree to provide mentors in June, Be the Business might not receive mentor contact details until July and it could take Growth Hubs several months to find a suitable match.

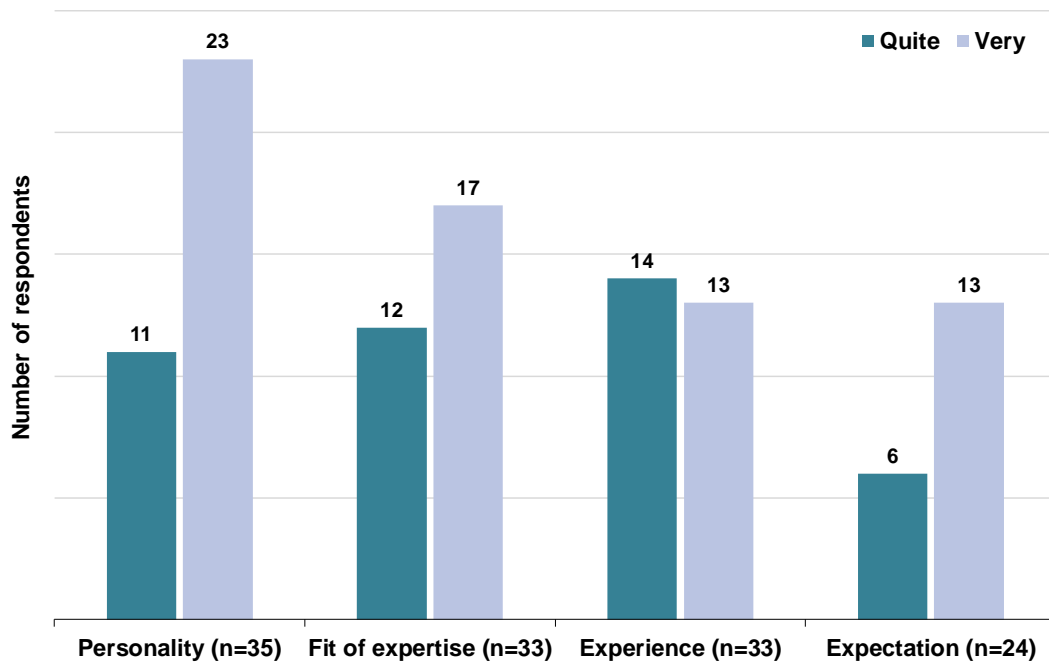
*The matching process was considered to be the most important step by all consultees*

- 3.37 Individuals were introduced to their mentor/mentee via an email from the Growth Hub. In a minority of cases mentors were sent their mentees’ profile form in advance of this email. Following the email, it was then up to the pair to arrange their next contact. **Notably, mentees viewed the first engagement as the start of the relationship whereas mentors tended to view it as a “chemistry test”.** This difference could reflect their relative experience of mentoring – mentors were more experienced and placed value on the chemistry of the match from the outset. Mentees, and most mentors, were not offered a choice of partner by the Growth Hubs but there was a good level of trust that Growth Hubs were best placed to make a match. **Consultation evidence suggested that the matching process had improved over time:** in three cases where mentors had more than one mentee, they were better matched the second time.
- 3.38 **Overall, mentees felt they were “quite” or “very” well matched with their mentor** (Figure 3-9). Mentees were asked to rate the quality of their match across four categories. The results indicated that, from the mentee perspective, the programme was most successful in matching individuals on their personality and expertise e.g. mentors’ skills, sector specific knowledge, business expertise (see example in box). This is a promising finding. The chemistry between mentors and mentees was one of the most important determining factors of a successful relationship. Evidence on the importance of personal chemistry within the MfG mentoring relationship (e.g. personal chemistry, trust) to the benefits experienced by mentees is reported in Section 4. The above positive findings on matching were also reflected in the mentor feedback (Figure 3-10).

### MENTEE PERSPECTIVE

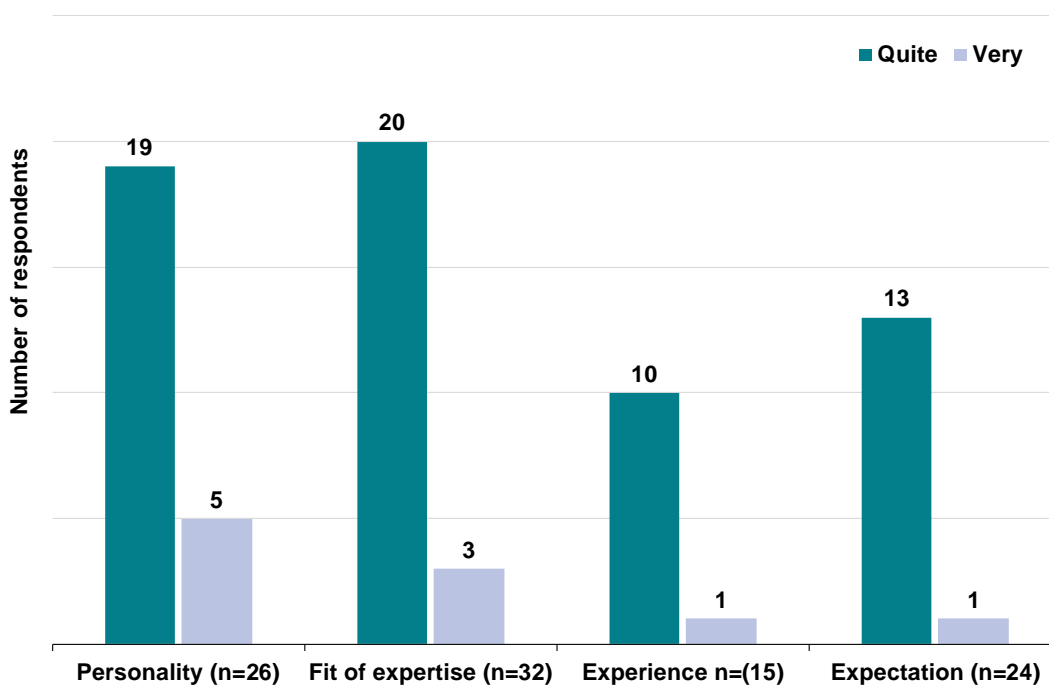
*The owner of a retail company wanted support from a mentor with SME experience to guide them through the business’ rapid scale up. They were paired with the former Finance Director of a successful e-commerce SME. The mentor brought valuable knowledge of automation, marketing techniques and production line efficiency. They also had similar personalities and liked to take a “hands-on” approach*

Figure 3-9: Do you feel you were well matched with your mentor? (Very, quite, a little, not) (n=40)



Source: SQW

Figure 3-10: Do you feel you were well matched with your mentee? (Very, quite, a little, not) (n=36)



Source: SQW. Note that graph accounts for mentors who mention multiple mentees

3.39 Other examples of mentoring are reported in case study evidence (Annex B) and the box below (relates to different relationships).

#### **MENTEE PERSPECTIVE**

*The CEO of a technology company reported that their expectations of MfG had been surpassed: they were challenged more than they expected, and their mentor was very invested. The matching process worked “brilliantly” – they were quite similar people, with similar backgrounds, and found it easy to relate to one another. The mentor worked in a different sector but had similar expertise, meaning they could offer relevant advice from a new perspective.*

#### **MENTOR PERSPECTIVE**

*One BAE systems mentor reported to be well matched with their mentee in terms of personality, sector, expertise and geography. Their mentee worked for an SME that operated in a complementary sector, which enabled valuable knowledge spillovers to the mentor. They reported exposure to a new way of thinking, improved industrial relations and introduction to new technologies.*

### 3.40 **The matching process worked less well when mentors and mentees had different expectations of the relationship.**

For mentees, this stemmed from a different understanding of the commitment required for the relationship – there was confusion over how much support they could ask of their mentor, and how often they could expect to meet. For mentors, their mentees either wanted considerably more support than is offered in mentoring (e.g. financial forecasting, emotional support) or did not have a clearly defined issue (see example box). Three mentees and two mentors suggested that this issue could be addressed by the introduction of an “expectations meeting” to the matching process. There were some examples of this happening in practice (see Section 4). Other MfG relationships worked less well because of geographic distance, mentees not having a clearly defined issue or a poor fit of expertise (see examples below).

#### **MENTOR PERSPECTIVE**

*In one mentoring relationship the mentee had not thought about what they wanted to achieve from the relationship. For example – one discussion was centred on the next year’s strategic plan, but it was also clear that the mentee was unsure if they intended to keep the business. The mentee just wanted to know more about a variety of topics. This was difficult for the mentor who would have preferred a clear structure.*

#### **MENTEE PERSPECTIVE**

*One mentee felt that he had been poorly matched with his mentor in terms of the specific area of his business that he wanted help with. The mentee, who is the commercial director of a manufacturing firm, was partnered with a mentor who specialised in manufacturing operations. However, the issues that the mentee had hoped to address primarily concerned assisting the business through a period of growth, and the necessary systems that should be implemented during this transition. He therefore felt that the specific manufacturing background, on which they seemed to have been matched, was not particularly relevant.*

*A second area that matching has been less successful was on time commitments. Several mentees said that they struggled to maintain the relationship due to the busy schedule of their mentor. In one case, a mentor said she would have been willing to commit far more time than either of her mentees wished for. Therefore, it could be possible to match more appropriately according to the time that individuals are willing to commit to the programme.*

- 3.41 **There was no clear consensus on which factors should be prioritised for the matching process.** The relative importance of expertise, sector, geography and experience was very personal to each mentoring relationship.

### *Post-match engagement*

- 3.42 The pilot programme did not have any fixed engagement procedures for mentees or mentors once the matching process was completed. Some Growth Hubs delivered a number of post-match activities, but these were not consistent across all. Consultations with mentees and mentors found limited evidence of post-match engagement, where it did occur activity was infrequent and inconsistent. Some of the issues presented in the sections above could be addressed by better post-match support mechanisms for mentees from Growth Hubs and mentors from Be the Business. Improved communication after the initial match would ensure mentees/mentors felt supported throughout the process, capture feedback quickly, monitor activity and respond to issues. This finding links to a wider point about ownership: who is responsible for the success of the mentoring relationship? It is unclear to mentors and mentees whether responsibility lies with them, Be the Business or Growth Hubs.

### Reflections

- 3.43 Overall the programme was implemented in line with the delivery model: Growth Hubs recruited mentees to the programme and Be the Business recruited mentors. Growth Hub advisors paired mentees and mentors based on information provided in their respective profile forms.
- 3.44 Mentees and mentors generally considered the delivery of the programme to be effective and efficient: both groups of consultees were satisfied with the quality of their match and were confident that their relationships would lead to improved business performance. The programme was less effective at marketing and promotion, providing a consistent induction to mentors and communicating with mentees/mentors after the matching process. Mentors and mentees offered suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme (see Section 4). The relationship between the programme's delivery and its early effects will be explored next.

## 4. Early effects of the programme

The purpose of the MfG pilot programme is to improve management and leadership practices in SMEs. The adoption of these practices is then expected to lead to improved business performance and productivity. Thus, the focus is on the effects experienced by mentees – individually and on their organisations.

### **Mentee effects**

The evaluation evidence found that the MfG programme activities have translated into key early effects for mentees. These included: increased awareness of management and leadership practices; increased confidence in implementing these practices; and development of soft skills – notably, communication, teamwork and time management. The ‘trust’ developed between the mentees and mentors has helped mentees individually and resulted in positive outcomes for their organisations (e.g. improvements to company structures; clearer company vision/values; new marketing and staff retention strategies).

In most cases (32), MfG mentoring relationships had also generated positive organisational effects. There is evidence from mentee consultations that the programme has generated improvements to SME business performance and productivity (10 SMEs reported productivity gains e.g. through implementing new cost systems, of which three relationships were completed). Thus, addressing the key rationale for the programme. However, mentee consultees were not able to provide quantification of business performance and productivity (e.g. in terms of employment and turnover). The full extent of these effects will need to be assessed in a future impact evaluation but the signs at this early stage are positive. The above findings are especially encouraging given the short time elapsed since relationships were completed and the long time-paths to effects.

Most mentees reported that the dynamic with their mentor was an enabling factor to their individual-level and organisational-level benefits. The personal dynamic with their mentor (trusting, openness and collaborative) was of “massive importance”. In practice, a trusted and respected mentor gave the relationship traction: mentees were more inclined to listen to advice, prepare for meetings and were quicker to implement changes in their business.

### **Mentor effects**

The mentor and stakeholder consultations indicated that mentors benefited from the programme in terms of developing their awareness and soft skills. It gave them more confidence and a better understanding of the ‘SME world’. The extent to which these individual benefits influence changes within the mentor organisation remains to be seen. This was not the primary intention of the programme.

### **Additionality**

Overall, the nature and strength of the mentoring relationships had influenced the achievement of effects. There is medium-to-high outcome additionality for the MfG programme: six mentee responses of benefits would not have occurred at all, and 30 mentee responses of benefits accelerated, higher quality and on a larger scale (MfG accelerated effects by between six months and two years). The evaluation evidence suggests the underlying theory of change is occurring as intended.



- 4.1 This section sets out the early effects of the MfG pilot programme on the individual mentees and their organisations i.e. the primary intended beneficiaries of the programme. Specifically, it focuses on the influence of the mentoring relationship on the nature of these effects, and to what extent these effects are additional (i.e. as a result of the programme). The section also identifies the effects on individual mentors, in terms of their own personal development. The evidence is primarily based on consultations with mentees and mentors, and supported by feedback from stakeholders and Growth Hubs.
- 4.2 In presenting the evaluation evidence below, we wish to highlight the following points.
- A relatively short time has elapsed since the mentoring relationships ended (some relationships are still underway), so only early effects have been reported.
  - The nature and amount of mentoring activities (incl. the quality of the matching) influenced the effects realised, and the subsequent attribution to the programme.
  - Mentees generally found it difficult to provide any quantitative estimates on the influence mentoring had on business performance (e.g. employment, turnover).
  - Mentors experienced a range of individual benefits as a result of their mentoring relationships. It was too early to identify any benefits for the mentor organisations, although this was not an intended outcome of the programme.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the above, the evaluation found positive results on the early effects of MfG.

## Mentee perspectives

### *Individual effects*<sup>39</sup>

- 4.4 Almost all mentees had personally developed from their MfG relationship. The programme most commonly improved SME leaders' confidence in implementing management and leadership practices (23). Mentees reported that the relationship with their mentor was a unique, trusted environment for them to voice concerns and test their ideas (see example 1 in the box below). Mentors provided feedback, reassurance and impartial support, giving mentees increased confidence to manage and lead their firms. Mentee evidence highlighted the "loneliness" associated with being an SME leader: it is difficult to show weakness in front of employees, whilst maintaining credibility and sometimes mentees were not able to rely on their Board for support (see example 2 in the box below). In these cases, their mentors were sounding boards, offering a chance to reflect and clarify thoughts.

**Example 1:** MfG gave the Chief Executive of a charity a safe environment to talk through ideas with external input and challenge. The mentor was seen to provide objective advice that could not be offered by people within his organisation nor from external paid-for coaches.

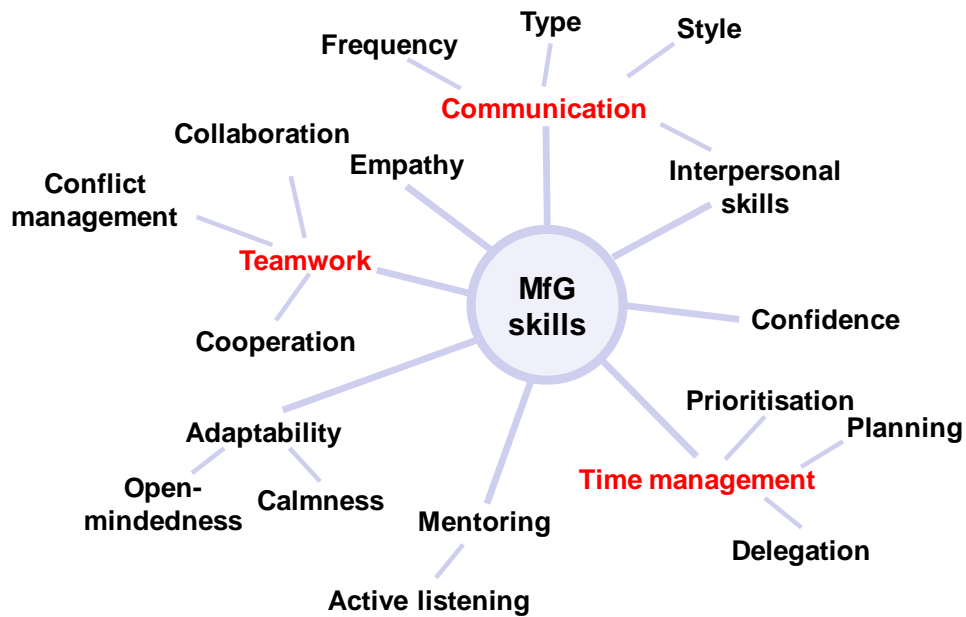
**Example 2:** One mentee had recently been externally recruited to manage an old family-run business through a difficult financial period. They wanted to implement new ideas but struggled to get the support of the Board.

<sup>39</sup> Findings here are based on responses to Q19 "How have you personally developed from your experience of mentoring so far?"

- 4.5 Alongside improved confidence in their existing ideas, **mentees also became aware of new management and leadership practices (21)**. As a result of MfG, SME leaders implemented new strategies (e.g. an export plan for Thailand and Singapore), established organisational structures (e.g. transition the business to a partnership model) and developed business models.<sup>40</sup> More examples of these organisational benefits are detailed in Table 4-1. Six mentees reported a renewed appreciation of dedicated time to reflect and better communication skills – they could articulate their ideas to employees, board members, stakeholders and clients with more clarity. Other benefits included improved networks (e.g. because the mentee and mentor organisation were in the same supply chain or in one case, a mentee met a potential collaborator at the MfG Birmingham launch event) and improved mental health and wellbeing (e.g. more efficient use of time enabled a better work-life balance).
- 4.6 **More than half of mentees went on to develop new management, leadership and soft skills (22)**. Mentees were better able to convey their ideas, dedicate time to problem-solving and manage complex dynamics within their workforce. The most marked skills improvements were in relation to mentees' communication, time management and teamwork abilities (see example). These skills were developed through a combination of explicit instruction (e.g. a mentor showing their mentee examples of staff retention strategies) and implicit learning (e.g. seeing the benefits of open and honest communication in the MfG relationship and wanting to replicate in their own organisation). In two cases, this upskilling motivated SME leaders to seek additional training – one had enrolled in a part-time Master of Business Administration (MBA).
- One mentee had recently taken over the management of a firm from their father and was struggling to gain the respect of their employees. The mentor improved their **communication skills** and helped them to build better relationships with staff. Linked to this, they learned to consider the impact of business decisions on employee behaviour, motivation and commitment.
- 4.7 A summary of the mentees' skills development is presented in Figure 4-1. In some cases it is difficult to make the distinction between skills and attributes – i.e. someone can have naturally good people skills, but it is also possible to develop them via improved communication skills, open-mindedness, empathy. Given this, we grouped all the feedback under skills.
- 4.8 It is worth mentioning there were only four cases where mentees had not experienced benefits from the programme. This was because the mentoring relationships had broken down either after the initial match or soon after. This was obviously not a desirable outcome. We highlight two points from this: the relationships failed quickly which can be considered a positive (as opposed to a slow protracted end which uses more resource/wastes time); the absence of benefits was not because of the efforts of ongoing or completed relationship.

<sup>40</sup> It is noteworthy that mentees did not specify any recognised management and leadership techniques, such as 'Just-in-Time Manufacturing'.

Figure 4-1: Skills developed by mentees during MfG (n=38)



Source: SQW; Note: the skills highlighted in red were the most cited by mentee consultees

### Organisation effects<sup>41</sup>

4.9 In most cases MfG mentoring relationships had generated positive organisational effects (32). These benefits occurred either as a primary outcome of the mentoring relationship, e.g. “quick wins” identified by their mentor, or as a secondary outcome from an individual benefit, e.g. better decision-making skills enabled a business to make better use of its human and financial resources. The most reported organisational benefit was the adoption of new or improved management and leadership practices. This follows the individual-level findings: SME leaders who have been exposed to new or improved management and leadership practices went on to adopt new approaches in their own organisations. Some examples of organisational effects are included in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Examples of organisational effects from consultations with mentees

Business planning improvements	Employee engagement improvements	Other benefits
Improvements to company structure (e.g. changes to Board make up)	Introduced formal feedback and appraisal processes	Increased understanding of the benefits of mentoring
Clearer company ‘vision’ (e.g. establishing core company values)	Improved benefits package for employees (e.g. bonuses) and commitment to “wellbeing of the workplace”, improving employee engagement	Improved mental health and wellbeing of staff (e.g. better work-life balance, mentees feel less pressure)
New marketing strategy (e.g. creating product bundles and ‘add at checkout’ options)	Restructuring of senior management team (e.g. to establish cross-Group responsibility)	Higher staff satisfaction (e.g. via better pay, clearer purpose, improved benefits)

<sup>41</sup> Findings here are based on responses to Q20 “What benefits has your organisation experienced as a result of the mentoring?”

Business planning improvements	Employee engagement improvements	Other benefits
Development of new business cases (e.g. to bring HR function in house)	Adapting job roles to best suit individual skills	
Creation of new job opportunities (e.g. to support a new product line)	Junior representative position introduced to company Board	
Reviewing pay structures and retention strategies		

Source: SQW

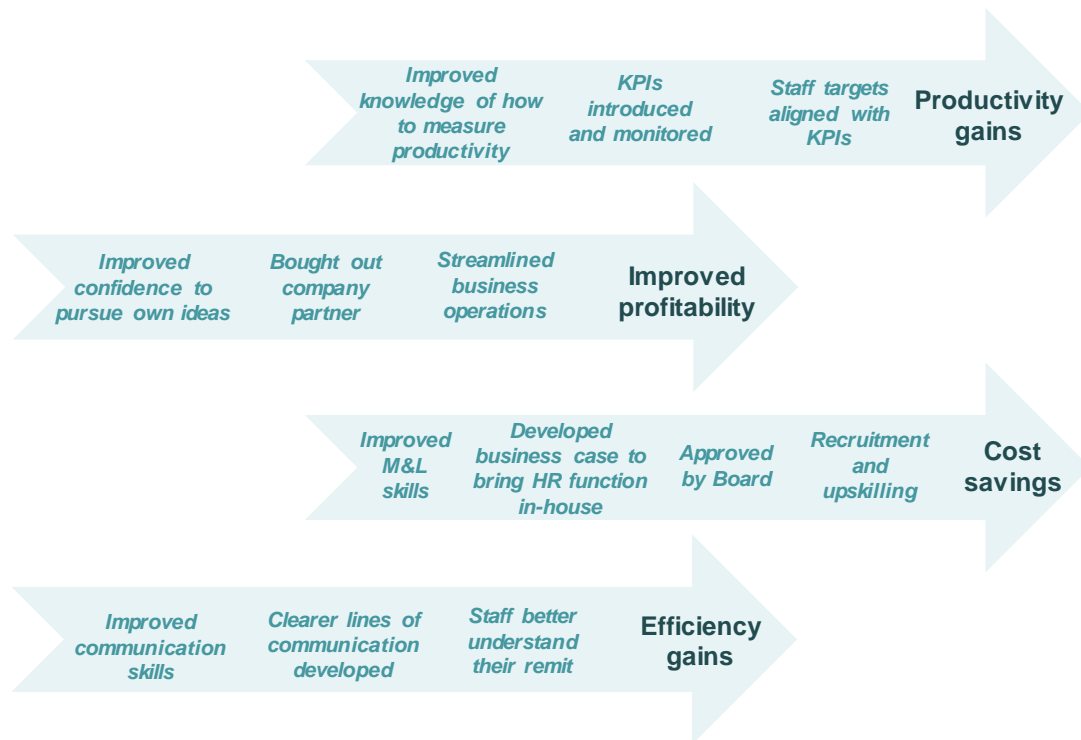
- 4.10 **Most notably, the programme generated improvements to SME business performance and productivity (15).**<sup>42</sup> In these cases, MfG mentoring had helped businesses to create job roles to support new areas of the business, upskill existing staff and explore new markets. Of these, ten SMEs had reported productivity gains from their mentoring relationship.<sup>43</sup> These productivity improvements were a combination of “quick wins” (e.g. new cost systems, time management software) and “slower burns” (e.g. happier, more engaged and focused staff leads to higher output over time). Given that many mentees were in ongoing MfG relationships at the time of consultation (17), including six of the mentees who reported productivity gains,<sup>44</sup> this finding suggests that SME leaders were able to realise benefits for their business performance relatively quickly.
- 4.11 Four examples of how business performance benefits were realised under MfG are presented in Figure 4-2. One mentee applied to MfG because they did not know how to improve productivity (see top arrow). Their mentor helped them to understand how productivity can be improved and what measures can be used to monitor it. The pair co-developed three key performance indicators (KPIs) that were tracked and monitored in monthly meetings with the Finance Director. The mentee explained these measures to their workforce and aligned its staff targets to the KPIs. Better co-ordination and more effective monitoring have generated productivity gains.

<sup>42</sup> Mentees did not quantify the improvements to their business performance.

<sup>43</sup> Productivity gains were self-reported.

<sup>44</sup> Of the ten mentees who reported productivity gains as a result of MfG, six were in 'live' relationships, three were in relationships that had closed, and one mentee was unsure of the status of their relationship.

Figure 4-2: Examples of business performance benefits to SMEs



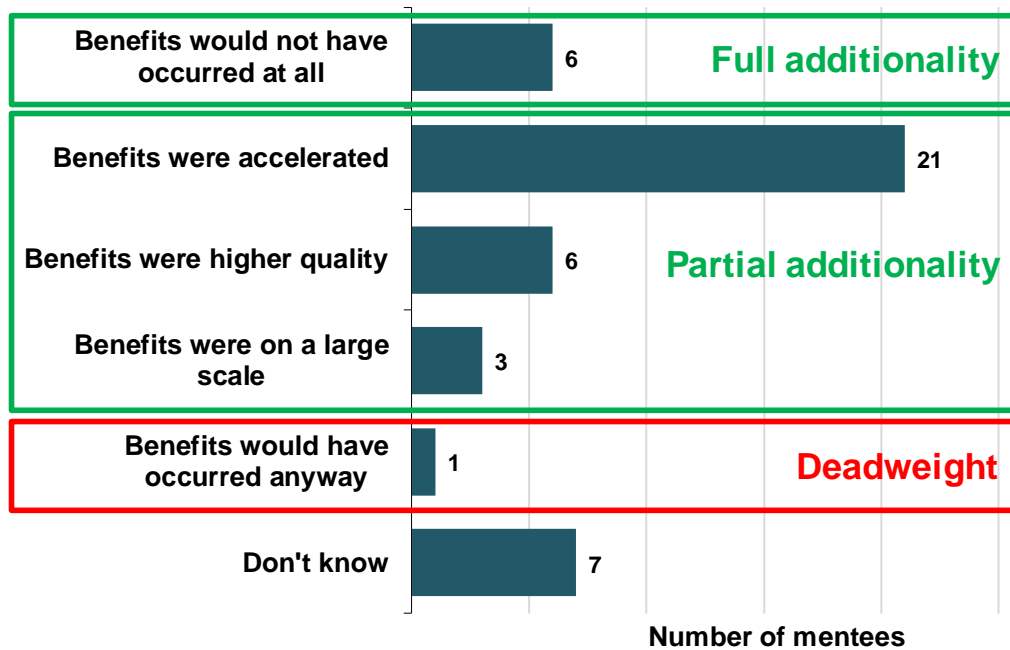
Source: Mentee consultations

### **Mentee benefit additionality**

- 4.12 It is important to assess whether the mentees’ individual and organisational benefits would have occurred without MfG due to other factors (e.g. mentees accessing other support or the firms’ own internal development). Thus, estimating the extent to which benefits occur as a result of the MfG programme (i.e. additionality) is essential. Mentees reported on whether the benefits would have occurred without their MfG mentoring relationship and if so, were they accelerated, on a larger scale or better quality? The results are presented in Figure 4-3.
- 4.13 **In most cases the MfG mentoring relationship positively influenced the nature of the mentee- and SME-level effects (32).** The programme either accelerated outcomes, improved their quality/scale or, for six mentees, was central to the benefits occurring at all. The benefits were accelerated in over half of MfG relationships: SME leaders often understood the adjustments that they needed to make to their businesses but lacked the confidence and knowledge to implement changes. Their mentors guided them through this process, speeding up the effects by between six months and two years.<sup>45</sup> Linked to this, the management and leadership knowledge developed by mentees improved the quality of their business interventions in six cases. There was only one example where the individual and business benefits would have been achieved over the same time period, at the same quality and on the same scale without MfG (i.e. deadweight). In the remaining seven cases mentees felt it was too early to comment on additionality.

<sup>45</sup> Three mentees specified by how much the programme accelerated their outcomes.

Figure 4-3: What would have happened to the benefits described without the programme? (n=40)



Source: SQW; NB: Mentees can report more than one type of additionality (e.g. accelerated and higher quality benefits), 'Don't know' includes the 4 mentees who did not report any benefits

#### Productivity improvements additionality

4.14 Given the interest in productivity, Table 4-2 provides a breakdown on the additionality of the business productivity improvements reported by ten mentees. The results indicate two mentees reported full additionality, five mentees' benefits were accelerated, two reported a combination of speed, quality and scale additionality and one mentee was not able to comment. The pattern reflects the findings reported in Figure 4-3.

Table 4-2: Additionality of improvements to business productivity (n=10)

	Number of mentees
Benefits would not have occurred at all	2
Benefits were accelerated	7
Benefits were higher quality	1
Benefits were on a larger scale	1
Benefits would have occurred anyway	0
Don't know	1

Source: SQW; NB: Mentees can report more than one type of additionality (e.g. accelerated and higher quality benefits)

4.15 **Overall, we consider the findings on additionality to be very encouraging given for some mentees mentoring support was ongoing and for others it has been a relatively short time since their relationship ended.** The results in Figure 4-3 indicate that the early effects on mentees and their organisations were either partly or wholly additional to the programme. This corroborates the earlier finding that mentees were more confident to implement their own ideas, and therefore their business issue was addressed sooner. Mentees developed better awareness of management and leadership practices, and either implemented wholly new ideas or used better, more suitable interventions.

- 4.16 Mentees were also asked to consider how the nature of the mentoring relationship influenced the benefits they experienced. **Most mentees reported that the dynamic with their mentor had a positive effect on their individual and organisational benefits:** 18 mentees described it as “*very influential*” and a further eight thought the dynamic was “*quite influential*”.<sup>46</sup> For example, one mentee thought the mentoring relationship was of “*massive importance*” to their benefits: they trusted and respected their mentor, meaning they listened to advice, prepared for meetings and were quick to implement changes in their business. This finding highlights the importance of the matching process to the success of the programme.
- 4.17 **For some relationships, the quality of the match was seen to be the most important part of the programme from the outset.** Three mentoring relationships started with a “chemistry meeting” to test whether the pair were well suited in practice and one other checked in with their mentor at the end of each meeting to check the relationship was still working. These anecdotes suggest the importance of the match to the programme’s success. As one mentee explained, they probably would not have completed the programme if they had not “clicked” with their mentor.
- 4.18 We now turn to benefits accruing to the mentor and potentially their organisations. We reiterate that the primary aim of the MfG programme is on developing the mentees so that they adopt management and leadership practices resulting in improved business performance and productivity. However, the stakeholder evidence and feedback from mentors themselves suggests mentors have also personally developed in terms of their soft (and in some cases) business skills. The mentoring experience has given them more confidence and led them to having a better understanding of the ‘SME world’. The extent to which these individual benefits influence changes within the mentor organisation remains to be seen, but we found no evidence of this to date.

## Mentor perspectives

- 4.19 Although the core purpose of MfG is to develop mentees and their SME organisations, the programme also generated a range of benefits for most mentors.<sup>47</sup> A few mentors anticipated that the relationship would be an opportunity for mutual-learning and others came to this realisation as the mentoring relationship developed. The most cited benefit to mentors was learning from their mentees (16).
- **Exposure to an SME environment:** their mentees were operating within tighter margins and had to respond to issues very quickly. This experience gave mentors renewed motivation to push for quicker change in their own organisation and helped two mentors to understand the challenges of potential customers.
  - **Reverse mentoring:** mentees tended to be in more senior positions (e.g. business owner, managing director) in their organisation than mentors were in theirs.<sup>48</sup> In some cases, the relationship gave mentors insights into the executive decision-making process, and the pressures of running a company. Mentors also learned new marketing approaches, the importance of having personal relationships with

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<sup>46</sup> 30 mentees gave a response to this question.

<sup>47</sup> 8 mentors did not receive any personal benefits as a result of MfG.

<sup>48</sup> See profile of mentors and mentees in Figure 1-1.

employees and crisis-management techniques. Three mentors found their mentees to be “*exemplary*”, “*impressive*” and “*inspirational*”.

- 4.20 In addition to direct learning from mentees, mentors reported personal development (13) and improved mentoring skills (11). The mentoring relationships encouraged mentors to reflect on their own delivery style, improved confidence in their own skills set and inspired them to pursue non-executive roles. Most mentors had only mentored individuals at junior level to them, within their own organisations and so the MfG relationship offered an opportunity to add to their existing mentoring skills. Newly developed mentoring skills varied across mentors, they included: taking a “hands-off” approach, letting the mentee set the pace of the relationship, active listening and being relatable. Other benefits to mentors from MfG were personal satisfaction and improved networks (e.g. one mentor improved their connection with a business in their supply chain via MfG).
- 4.21 Mentors interviewed reported no benefits to their organisation as a result of the programme to date.<sup>49</sup> It has also not been possible to establish the extent to which the individual benefits experienced by mentors would eventually lead to tangible improvements for their employers. Given the size of the mentoring organisations, any company-level effects are likely to be minor. That said, the feedback from mentors indicated that they did expect their personal benefits to influence their working style. The findings on mentor organisations are not surprising given the focus of the MfG programme is on mentee SMEs.

#### ***Mentor benefit additionality***

- 4.22 Mentors were also asked to consider the extent to which they would have experienced the individual effects in the absence of the MfG programme. Of the consultees who answered, all reported that the programme accelerated, improved or enhanced their personal outcomes, including six mentors who would not have experienced the benefits at all without the programme<sup>50</sup>. The high additionality is attributable to the programme design: mentors would not have otherwise mentored an SME leader nor have had access to the SME environment.

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<sup>49</sup> This does not mean that there were no benefits for mentor organisations in the wider population.

<sup>50</sup> 17 mentors provided a response to the question “*What would have happened to the benefits described without the programme?*”



## 5. Lessons from delivery

Consultations with mentees, mentors, Growth Hubs and stakeholders offered insights into what had worked well, and less well, in the pilot programme's delivery. This evidence has been triangulated to identify five key lessons to improve the programme's overall effectiveness and efficiency for its scale up.

- 1. Increase marketing and promotional activities of the programme:** future promotional material should align with the key motivations for mentors – opportunity for personal development and altruistic reasons (e.g. helping to address UK productivity issues) and mentees – unique access to high-quality, objective advice.
- 2. Establish a consistent induction process:** this is to ensure all mentors understand what they are embarking on, not just those with mentoring experience. Although the pilot's induction activities were “a good starting point” they could be improved in terms of quality, frequency and content.
- 3. Continue to prioritise the quality of the matching process:** this was consistently viewed as the most important “step” in the delivery process and there was concern amongst stakeholders and mentees that the programme's scale up would compromise the quality of the matching process.
- 4. Improve communication with mentees/mentors throughout the mentoring relationship:** this is to ensure they feel supported throughout the process, manage expectations of the programme, collect monitoring data on mentoring activity, receive feedback quickly and respond to issues.
- 5. Identify ‘ownership’ of mentoring relationships (linked to lesson 4):** there was a lack of clarity of responsibility, or ‘ownership’ concerning certain processes. There is merit in having someone with oversight of the relationship, acting as a key point of contact.

### Wider perspectives

Mentors' personal attributes were perceived to be as valuable to mentoring relationship as their business acumen. Mentees wanted mentors to be interested in them and their business and so the mentors' ability to personally connect with mentees was of real importance. The most commonly cited characteristics of a good mentor by MfG mentees were being a good listener (8), open-minded (11), experienced and knowledgeable (8). Mentors valued similar qualities in mentees (e.g. open-minded, transparent, good listener, curious). However, mentors preferred for mentees to have a clear objective, to be available and to be flexible.

Mentees and mentors liked mentoring relationships to be tailored to the individual need of the mentee. Overall, they thought that mentoring can occur at any stage of SMEs' development, but the type of support required would vary. The programme should continue to allow flexibility in the level of mentoring. Mentors generally recognised that the optimal level of mentoring was largely down to personal preference, and what works for some may not work for others. In contrast, mentees expressed more specific preferences for mentoring relationships in terms of frequency, nature and duration of their interactions with mentors.

- 5.1 This section sets out the key lessons from delivery to inform the programme's scale up. It triangulates evidence from mentors, mentees, stakeholders and Growth Hubs to identify areas for improvement in each stage of delivery. It then goes on to cover wider perspectives, including what makes a good mentor and mentee, using consultation evidence, a review of programme documentation and wider literature. We understand that some of the ongoing activities for the scale up address some of the lessons outlined below.

## Lessons from delivery

### 1. Increase marketing and promotional activities of the programme

- 5.2 All consultees were very positive about the value of the programme and there was consensus that more was needed to be done to promote it. Growth Hubs reported low brand awareness of Be the Business and MfG. Future promotional material should align with the key motivations for mentors – opportunity for personal development and altruistic reasons (e.g. helping to address UK productivity issues) and mentees - unique access to high-quality, objective advice. One stakeholder noted that more could be done to celebrate the overall purpose of the intervention: to support and nurture British industry. In their view, this is a compelling selling point that would appeal to both mentors and mentees.
- 5.3 All consultees provided recommendations for the most effective marketing and promotional activities for the scale up:
- **Promote the programme with mentor organisations** – Be the Business could “piggyback” on Productivity Leadership Group and other businesses’ marketing activities, for example MfG could have a promotional stand at an Amazon roadshow. This would be cost-effective, ensuring more resource could be allocated to the matching process (see lesson 3) and reinforce the programme’s association with top-tier firms.
  - **Better utilise existing business networks** – a minority of mentors and two Growth Hubs recommended that Be the Business recruit through their existing networks. Connecting with business representative organisations (e.g. CBI, North West Aerospace Alliance, British Retail Consortium) would help to ensure that the mentor pool has broad experience. This activity could be targeted if there was an increase in demand for a specific sector. Be the Business should promote to organisations rather than individuals. Mentor evidence highlighted the importance of senior-level buy in to individual mentor commitment.
  - **Personalise marketing to SMEs** – a few mentees reported that direct marketing that is either tailored or presents a personal experience is most effective. They suggested using targeted social media adverts on LinkedIn and Facebook that reference the businesses’ location and sector – for example, a business in Newcastle could be shown a case study video of a mentee in the North East.

### 2. Establish a consistently high quality induction process

- 5.4 A consistently high-quality induction process should be established across all regions to ensure all mentors understand what they are embarking on, not just those with mentoring

experience. Stakeholder evidence highlighted that Growth Hubs had inductions procedures in place but that the quality of the induction varied (e.g. poor quality webinars, induction events were not well timed). Although the pilot's induction activities were "*a good starting point*" they could be improved in terms of quality (good quality webinars), frequency (events available to all at any starting point) and content (clear guidance, not just 'programme promotion').

5.5 Consultation evidence revealed that mentors' existing mentoring experience tended to be internal to their organisation and with junior colleagues. MfG posed a new 'type' of mentoring where the mentees were senior decision makers in different organisations. This difference led some mentors to be less clear on how they could add value.

5.6 Some suggestions for the induction process from consultation evidence are listed below.

- **Focus the content on what the programme will look like in practice**, specific insights into previous MfG relationships, tips on the mentoring for SMEs and guidance on how to improve productivity would help mentors to confidently transition from internal mentoring to MfG. The pilot induction webinars and events were seen to be more promotional than educational, one mentee described the content of the induction webinar as "*this is what we've done so far*" rather than "*this is what the programme is*".
- **Draw on the alumni network** to facilitate learning from others' experiences, i.e. mentors and mentees sharing their learnings. Some mentor organisations (e.g. John Lewis Partnership) had organised internal mentor groups to reflect on experiences. Where this had occurred, mentors had found it very useful.
- **Optional small group training sessions** to role play different mentoring scenarios. It is worth noting that not all mentors wanted a full induction into the programme. Therefore, it would be useful to establish more detailed, optional, induction 'add-ons' for less experienced and less confident mentors.

### **3. Continue to prioritise the quality of the matching process**

5.7 **The matching process was consistently viewed as the most important "step" in the delivery process.** Our research indicates that, overall, mentors and mentees have been satisfied with the quality of the match made by the Growth Hubs. Mentees reported that they were most well matched with their mentors in terms of personality, simultaneously the hardest thing for Growth Hub advisors to determine at the recruitment stage and an important enabling factor for business benefits.

5.8 There was concern amongst stakeholders and mentees that the programme's scale up would compromise the quality of the matching process. The pilot programme matching was manual and time-consuming but produced good results. However, in order to meet the scale up targets, the programme's matching process will need to include some automation. The scale up matching process should make considered matches that align personalities, expertise and expectations. This should ensure that enough emphasis is placed on the suitability of the mentor to the SME's issue and that mentees understand the nature and purpose of mentoring

(e.g. versus coaching). This could take the form of an early meeting to test the chemistry between the pair and to agree the overall objective of the relationship.

#### 4. Improve communication with mentors/mentees throughout the mentoring relationship

- 5.9 Communication from Be the Business to mentors and the four Growth Hubs to mentees was inconsistent and tapered off after the match had been made. In practice this meant that mentors and mentees did not always feel supported. This was seen as a missed opportunity by stakeholders and mentors to manage expectations of MfG relationships, collect monitoring data on mentoring activity, receive feedback quickly and respond to issues.
- 5.10 Stakeholders, mentors and mentees provided suggestions on how to improve communication although we are aware that in some instances, these activities may be happening already.
- **Assign mentors and mentees a key point of contact** in Be the Business and The Growth Company, respectively, so that questions can be answered quickly, and they feel supported throughout the process.
  - **Mentor and mentee ‘mid-way’ sessions** to share learning and experiences. This could also function as a useful way of pooling knowledge if, for example, a mentee had a question that their mentor could not answer but another mentor could.
  - **Email prompts to ensure relationships are progressing** – mentors and mentees were often unsure of the status of their relationship and how their relationship should be structured in terms of frequency, duration and mode of interaction (webinar, telephone, face-to-face).
    - Email prompts from Be the Business or The Growth Company would help to remind mentors/mentees of the programme’s expectations at given milestones – e.g. at three-, six-, nine- and twelve-month stages.
    - This could also serve as an opportunity to give examples of what other MfG relationships have achieved at this stage and remind mentors of the purpose of the programme e.g. *“your contribution to Mentoring for Growth is helping to improve the UK’s productivity”*.

#### 5. Identify ‘ownership’ of mentoring relationships (linked to lesson 4)

- 5.11 The nature of the programme’s set-up and relationship management is such that there are two separate organisations with an interest in both mentee and mentor satisfaction. The consultations found that both mentees and mentors sometimes felt there was a lack of clarity of responsibility, or ‘ownership’ concerning certain processes. Generally, the mentee SME had a closer relationship with the Growth Hub. If the relationship then did not proceed as planned, they were able to pick this up with their Growth Hub advisor (though this did not always happen, suggesting the process to do so could be clearer).
- 5.12 Mentors were aware of Be the Business through the recruitment process and latterly the Growth Hub through the profiling and matching process. However, mentors did not

necessarily see the Growth Hub as their primary point of contact should they need to follow up with someone, or ask questions including how to have a new mentee allocated.

- 5.13 Therefore, mentoring relationships may benefit from a key point of contact going forward. This could help to promptly answer questions regarding the relationship's progress, how and when it should end, and how to find a new mentor or new mentee.

### **Wider perspectives**

#### *Mentors' personal attributes were perceived to be as valuable to mentoring relationship as their business acumen*

- 5.14 Mentee consultees identified what makes a good mentor. Their feedback indicated that mentors' personal characteristics were as influential as technical skills and business experience on the success of the MfG relationships. **Mentees wanted mentors to be interested in them and their business** and so the mentors' ability to personally connect with mentees was of real importance. This links to feedback from mentees that a personal connection with a mentor gives the mentoring relationship traction: the incentive to spend time together is lessened if the pair are not well matched in personality. The most commonly cited characteristics of a good mentor by MfG mentors and mentees were being a good listener (9), open-minded (11), experienced and knowledgeable (8). The second 'tier' of important characteristics were humility, willingness to learn, transparency and authenticity. Some descriptions of 'good mentors' are given in the box below.

#### **A good mentor should be...**

... credible to the mentee in a way that is more meaningful than just being employed by a well-known company.

... confident to be open and honest about their experiences, especially with challenges they have faced in their careers

...trustworthy, able to listen, open minded, willing to challenge their mentee in a positive way, ask questions and share their own experiences

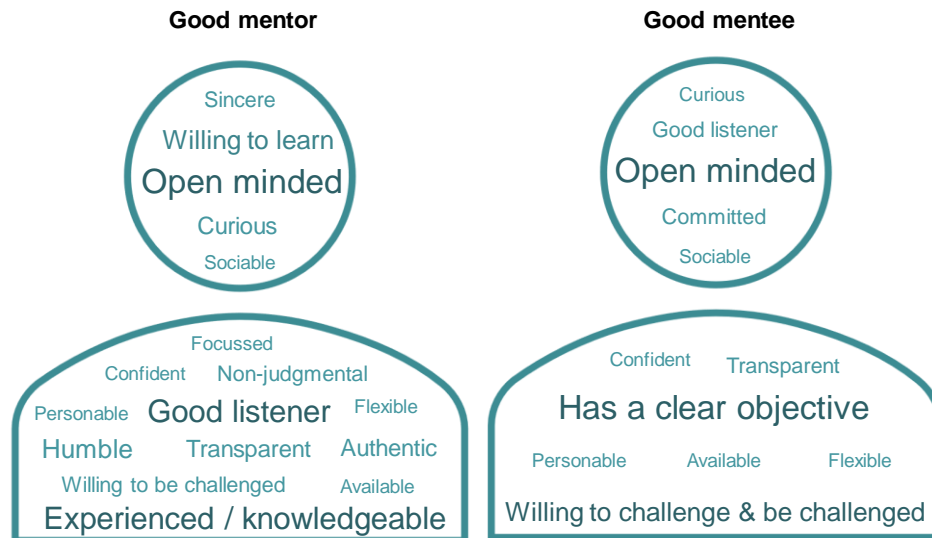
... willing to ask awkward and challenging questions to make the mentee think more deeply. They must also be really interested in SMEs and passionate about helping them to develop and grow

... able to bring experience into the relationship – they need 'life stories'

... personable and openminded.

- 5.15 Mentor consultees described what qualities make a good mentee. The qualities tended to be quite similar to their view of a good mentor (e.g. open-minded, transparent, good listener, curious). However, mentors preferred for mentees to have a clear objective, to be available and to be flexible. This is perhaps a reflection of feedback reported in section 3, where some mentors viewed their MfG relationships as less effective because it did not have a clearly articulated aim.
- 5.16 Figure 5-1 presents word maps of the characteristics of good mentors and mentees, whereby large font is used for the most commonly referenced qualities.

Figure 5-1: What makes a good mentor and mentee?



Source: SQW

*Mentees and mentors liked relationships to be tailored to the individual need of the mentee*

- 5.17 Overall consultees thought that mentoring can occur at any stage of SME’s development, but the type of support required would vary.<sup>51</sup> Mentoring was considered to be a personalised intervention that could be tailored to an individual’s needs at any given time. However, it could be most effective at improving business performance at “*inflection points*” – when a business is ready to transform in size, sector or markets, or at a ‘cross-road’ stage when choosing between two different actions. The Growth stage was preferred by a further five mentees, and three mentors, because it was an important time in businesses’ development to embed good practice. Three different mentees argued that mentoring would more effective after the start-up stage once a business is more settled on its strategy.
- 5.18 The programme should continue to allow flexibility in the level of mentoring. Mentors generally recognised that the optimal level of mentoring was largely down to personal preference, and what works for some may not work for others. It was therefore suggested that the programme should refrain from being too “prescriptive” in terms of the number, frequency or type of interactions between mentors and mentees. In contrast, mentees expressed more specific preferences for mentoring relationships:
- Mentors should meet with mentees between 3 and 8 times (5)<sup>52</sup>
  - Meetings should occur on a monthly (8) or quarterly (4) basis.<sup>53</sup> Responses ranged from between every two weeks to every three months. There was a preference for informal interactions (e.g. emails, short phone calls) in between
  - Face-to-face meetings are the optimal type of interaction (11), especially site visits for mentors to SMEs to fully understand the business.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> 19 out of 35 mentees reported that mentoring was suitable at any stage of business development.

<sup>52</sup> 5 mentees expressed a preference for number of interactions.

<sup>53</sup> 21 mentees expressed a preference for the frequency of interactions.

<sup>54</sup> 15 mentees expressed a preference for the type interaction.

## 6. Emerging conclusions

- 6.1 The MfG pilot programme commenced in 2018 and was delivered in partnership with four Growth Hubs – Birmingham, Manchester, North East and London – supporting c. 180 SMEs. The Growth Company was appointed as the national delivery partner to work with Be the Business for scaling up the programme.
- 6.2 The overall objective of the study was to undertake a process evaluation of the MfG programme – to assess its implementation and scale up going forward. In addition, the evaluation sought to capture evidence of early effects on programme participants on individual mentee and mentors and their respective organisations. The emerging conclusions are provided below. Three key points are highlighted in relation to the scope of the study.
- The focus was on assessing the delivery of the pilot programme including any learning to improve its future performance in scaling up.
  - The scale up is currently underway with some learning from the pilot already being actioned. Therefore, the findings from this study, including the lessons for future development, should be interpreted in this ‘evolving’ context.
  - The evaluation was not intended to be an ‘audit’ of programme activities but rather the emphasis was on ‘learning’ i.e. what worked well and less well.
- 6.3 The evaluation evidence involved a theory-based assessment to test the extent to which programme delivery was in line with the updated logic model and theory of change. This collected and analysed evidence through interviews with 12 stakeholders, 40 mentees and 36 mentors; and was supported by a review of programme documentation and monitoring data. Thus, the evaluation findings are primarily based on *customer experience perspectives* (i.e. mentees and mentors).

### Emerging conclusions

#### ***How has the programme been delivered and how effective has this been against programme aims and objectives?***

- 6.4 **The mentee and mentor consultations found that programme delivery was generally effective and efficient.** This is reinforced by two further findings: the majority of mentees and mentors interviewed rated the quality of the overall delivery of the programme as at least four out of five; and most mentees would recommend the programme to other SME leaders and nearly all mentors intended to remain in the programme. Within the context of these overall positive findings, we highlight the following relating to specific aspects of delivery.
- 6.5 **Marketing** – there was recognition of the efforts made by Be the Business and the Growth Hubs in raising awareness of the programme to prospective mentor organisations and SMEs. There was no marketing of the programme as there was no budget for this. Recognising this, the overall perception from stakeholders, mentees and mentors was that the marketing and promotional activities of the pilot to prospective mentees needed to be improved going forward.

6.6 **Recruitment** – Be the Business recruited mentor organisations from the Productivity Leadership Group. Once recruited, mentors completed profile forms capturing data on the motivations for joining the programme, specialisms, and mentoring preferences (e.g. time commitment, type of mentee business, number of mentees). Mentors were rejected by the Growth Hubs after an interview if they were not well matched to the programme. In contrast, the recruitment of SMEs was undertaken by the Growth Hubs mainly based on their existing client base. This reflected the short time for pilot delivery. The mentees also completed forms covering basic profile information, growth ambitions, support required, and their mentoring preferences. The feedback from mentees and mentors highlighted the following:

- The profile forms and interviews of mentees were generally considered fit for purpose.
- There was clear understanding and communication on what was expected of the mentees and mentors at this stage including the timeline for recruitment.
- The mentor induction activities (e.g. webinar), were considered “a good starting point”, but less experienced mentors would have valued additional support before commencing their mentoring relationship.
- There was no formal rejection process for unsuccessful mentees; the mentees were signposted by the Growth Hubs to other business support programmes.

6.7 **Matching** – the matching process was considered the most important step by mentees, mentors and stakeholders. The process was largely manual and drew on the information provided by mentee and mentor in the profile forms (as part of recruitment above). The Growth Hubs collated and analysed the information from both parties to make a match. Telephone discussions with mentees were undertaken by Growth Hubs to obtain further information, where necessary. The matching was viewed by mentees and mentors as high-quality overall. Specifically, we highlight the following in relation to the matching process:

- Mentees and mentors indicated that they were “well matched” in terms of: personality, expertise, and experience.
- Personal chemistry within the MfG relationship was considered an important enabling factor for individual and organisational mentee benefits to occur.
- Mentees viewed the first engagement as the start of the relationship whereas mentors considered it as a “chemistry test”.
- The matching process had improved over time, for example in cases where mentors had more than one mentee, the second matches were considered better quality.
- There was no clear consensus on which factors should be prioritised for the matching process (e.g. expertise, experience, sector, geography).
- The process worked less well when mentors and mentees had different expectations of the relationship.

6.8 **Post-match engagement** – there were two aspects to the post-match engagement that influenced the quality of mentoring relationship and the effectiveness of the programme



overall: there was no fixed engagement procedures for mentees and mentors after the matching process was completed; and no set post-match communication or guidance in place for Be the Business and the Growth Hubs to maintain relationships with mentors or mentees (as perceived by mentees and mentors). We understand from Be the Business and the Growth Hubs that mechanisms were in place for post-match engagement and communication and that these have been further developed as part of the scale up, for example (iMentor which facilitates communication with other mentors and also mentees; a follow-up call with Growth Hubs to check relationships are working well).

### **What are the early benefits of the programme on participants?**

- 6.9 The evaluation evidence found that the MfG programme activities have translated into key early effects for mentees. These include: increased awareness and implementation of management and leadership practices; and development of soft skills – communication, teamwork and time management. In most cases (32), mentoring relationships had also generated positive effects on mentee organisations, for example: improvements to company structures; clearer company vision; new marketing and staff retention strategies. Importantly, the programme has generated improvements to SME business performance and productivity: 10 SMEs reported productivity gains e.g. through implementing new cost systems. Thus, addressing the key rationale for the programme. However, mentee consultees were generally not able to quantify the improvements in business performance and productivity at this stage (e.g. in terms of employment and turnover).
- 6.10 The evaluation found that the ‘trust’ (along with the openness and collaboration) developed between the mentees and mentors helped mentees individually and resulted in positive outcomes for their organisations. Most mentees reported that the dynamic with their mentor was an enabling factor to their individual-level and organisational-level benefits. We consider the personal dynamic – specifically the ‘trust factor’ – to be a critical element in effective mentoring and realising organisational benefits. Therefore, programme activities which further cultivate and encourage this will be essential in the scale up.
- 6.11 The feedback from mentors (and stakeholders) suggested mentors also experienced benefits from the programme in three main ways:
- Increased learning (16) e.g. better understanding of decision-making processes in SMEs, crisis management techniques, new marketing approaches.
  - Improved personal development including soft skills (13) e.g. better communication, greater confidence, active listening, personal satisfaction, improved networks.
  - Improved mentoring skills (11) e.g. adopting “hands off approach”, allowing mentees to set the pace of relationships.
- 6.12 Overall, mentors had more confidence and a better awareness and understanding of the ‘SME world’. The extent to which the individual benefits identified influenced changes within the mentor organisation remains to be seen, but we found no evidence of this to date.
- 6.13 The evaluation found medium-to-high outcome additionality for the programme, specifically:
- 6 mentee responses of benefits would not have occurred at all (full additionality)

- 30 mentee responses of benefits were accelerated between six months and two years, were of higher quality, and on a larger scale (partial additionality)
  - 1 mentee response of benefits would have occurred anyway (deadweight).
- 6.14 In summary, the MfG programme has delivered activities as set out in the logic model and theory of change. The activities were aligned with the rationale for the programme to develop management and leadership practices of mentee businesses and improve business performance and productivity. The activities were appropriate and relevant in addressing market failures and barriers to SMEs' adoption of management and leadership practices. The activities have resulted in early effects for individual mentees and in some cases on their business performance and productivity that would not have happened otherwise. That said, the reported productivity gains should be treated with a degree of caution for two reasons: businesses considered productivity in a wide variety of ways, for example in terms of efficiency, reduced costs, and business growth; and mentees were not able to quantify the productivity gains.
- 6.15 The above findings are encouraging especially when there has been a relatively short time since mentoring relationships ended and the fact that it can take a long time for effects to materialise as a result of activities undertaken.

## Future development

- 6.16 We recommend the following improvements to the future development of the MfG programme. These have been informed by our evaluation findings, specifically the lessons set out in section 5. We reiterate, these would need to be considered in the context of the actions already underway in scaling up the programme or currently being considered by Be the Business and The Growth Company.
- **Recommendation 1: Increase marketing and promotional activities of the programme.** Going forward, develop a marketing plan (national and regional) to improve the level and breadth of marketing and promotional activities of the programme. This should include the development of marketing and promotional material that aligns with the key motivations for mentees and mentors to participate in the programme. The plan should consider the following three activities for the scale up as suggested by consultees:
    - Promote the programme with mentor organisations – Be the Business could leverage the Productivity Leadership Group and other businesses' marketing activities. This would be cost-effective and reinforce the programme's association with top-tier firms.
    - Better utilise existing business networks – a minority of mentors and two Growth Hubs indicated that recruitment to the programme should be done through the existing business networks of Be the Business (e.g. industry bodies and other intermediary organisations). Importantly, Be the Business should promote to organisations rather than individuals.

- Personalise marketing to SMEs – a few mentees suggested that direct marketing using social media adverts (e.g. LinkedIn and Facebook) tailored to SMEs would be an effective approach.
- **Recommendation 2: Establish a consistent induction process.** Some mentors were less clear on how they could add value to the SME mentee (partly because they had no experience of mentoring an SME). So, a consistent induction process should be established to ensure all mentors understand what they are embarking on. This is of particular importance given that the majority of mentors had only mentored junior colleagues within their organisations and mentoring SME leaders is likely to be quite different. In addition, consider improving the induction activities in two ways:
  - Focus on the content on what the programme will look like in practice
  - Draw on the alumni network to facilitate learning between mentees and mentors.
- **Recommendation 3: Continue to prioritise the quality of the matching process and continue to use the ‘Client Charter’.** There was concern amongst stakeholders and mentees that the programme’s scale up would compromise the quality of the matching process. The programme’s matching process will need to include some automation in the scale up. This should make matches that align personalities, expertise and expectations. Specifically, this should cover the suitability of the mentor to the SME’s issue and that mentees understand the nature and purpose of mentoring.
- To achieve this, we recommend the existing Client Charter is used as the basis for a ‘Mentoring Relationship Agreement’ (MRA). This will manage expectations of mentees and mentors to be signed off by both parties. This could include the information presented in the table below. This would help manage expectations on both sides and the commitment expected, and given the service is ‘free’ it adds some formality and clear articulation to the process. Importantly, business issues should be explicitly linked to productivity improvement, and this connection articulated.

**Table 6-1: Mentoring Relationship Agreement information**

Details of the process	Who takes the lead in terms of organising sessions etc.
Levels of engagement, frequency	General expectations
Details of the process	Process of disengagement
Style of engagement (e.g. all F2F)	Confidentiality
The topics to be covered and focused on (a menu could be included)	Mention the need for flexibility as new issues emerge during the mentoring.

Source: SQW

- **Recommendation 4: Improve communication with mentees and mentors.** After the matching process was completed, the communication from Be the Business to mentors and Growth Hubs to mentees was inconsistent and tapered off after the match. According to stakeholders, mentors and mentees, the programme should improve communication (post-match) through, for example:

- Mentors and mentees being assigned a key point of contact in Be the Business and The Growth Company, respectively
- Mentor and mentee 'mid-way' sessions to share learning and experiences
- Email prompts to ensure relationships are progressing.
- **Recommendation 5: Identify and ensure 'ownership' of mentoring relationships.** Mentee and mentor consultations suggested that there was sometimes a lack of clarity over who had responsibility, or 'ownership' of the mentoring relationship. Therefore, mentoring relationships may benefit from a key point of contact going forward. This could help to address questions regarding the relationship's progress, how and when it should end, and how to find a new mentor or mentee if necessary.
- **Recommendation 6: Continue to ensure improving productivity is the core objective of the programme and that this translates into the mentoring relationships.** Mentee businesses had different understanding of productivity and looked at this in a variety of ways (e.g. process efficiency, cost management, growth, profitability). Many mentees were recruited to address their business issue which may not be explicitly linked to productivity. Therefore, better connecting the mentoring activities to specifically improving business productivity will be important in the scale up.

## Annex A: List of consultees

### Scoping interviews

**Table A-1: Scoping consultees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Rory Campbell	Mentoring for Growth Programme Manager	Be the Business
Adam Hardy	Head of Evaluation	Be the Business
Jane Howells	Mentoring for Growth Programme Director	Be the Business
Caroline Lien	Interim Head of Programmes	Be the Business
Dawn Duggan	People, Skills and Talent lead	The Growth Company

### Stakeholders

**Table A-2: Stakeholder consultees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Richard Baker	BAE Systems
Wray Bennet	Aston Centre for Growth
Jenny Cridland	Be the Business
Susannah Davidson	Accenture
Arunima Dhar	John Lewis
Shanni Elcock	Be the Business
Helen Lee	Newcastle LEP
Tom Merry	Accenture
James Pickles	TPG
Trudie Roiz De Sa	KPMG
Kevin Saldanha	BEIS
Auryn Stevenson Hyde	BEIS

### Mentees

**Table A-3: Mentee consultees**

<b>Organisation</b>	
5 Data Solutions	JA Harrison
AAB Collection	Jeff Gosling
Able Services	Just Strong Ltd
AD Merchandising	MOMA Foods
Allsee Technologies	Next Recruitment

<b>Organisation</b>	
Betts Metal Sales	Oklahoma
Clarity	Pure Fabs
Clifton Trade Bathrooms	Residential Landlords Association
Clos-O-Mat	RJW Engineering
Degree 53	Rowlinson Knitwear
Electrica Ltd	Site Supply Group
Emily and Fin Ltd	Slater Heelis
Fenchurch Law	Social Communications
Finlay James (x2)	SRO Solutions
Fracino	STM Power Transmission
Guildhawk	Temperature Control
Harris Wharf	TPG Engineering
Health Harmonie	Waterfields Bakery
Howarth Air Technologies (x2)	Workspace Technology

Source: SQW

**Table A-4: Mentor consultees**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number of mentors</b>
JLP	8
GSK	7
BAE Systems	5
Siemens	3
Accenture	2
CISCO	2
McKinsey and Company	2
Amazon	1
AstraZeneca	1
Be the Business	1
EY	1
KPMG	1
Mahabis	1
TPG Engineering	1

Source: SQW

## Annex B: Case studies

- B.1 This Annex presents case studies of 'paired' relationships focussing on two aspects: process and early effects of the mentoring.

**Table B-1: List of case studies**

#	Mentee	Mentor	Type of case study
1	Howarth Air Technology	Siemens	Process
2	Next Recruitment	John Lewis Partnership	Process
3	Just Strong	Be the Business	Process
4	Fracino	John Lewis Partnership	Early impact
5	Site Supply	John Lewis Partnership	Early impact
6	Howarth Air Technology	GSK	Early impact
7	Closomat	Waitrose	Early impact
8	Clifton Trade Bathrooms	John Lewis Partnership	Early impact
9	Finlay James	BAE Systems	Process
10	Finlay James	KPMG	Process
11	Degree 53	McKinsey	Early impact
12	Okla	EY	Early impact

Source: SQW

## PROCESS CASE STUDY

Howorth Air Technology is a medical and pharmaceutical equipment manufacturer based in Bolton which specialises in engineering clean air ventilation systems and containment systems for hospitals and pharma companies. With a company history over 160 years and more than 100 employees, the Finance Director was seeking support on the business strategy, such as future product development and employee management. As a new Director, the mentee wanted to gain some practical experience from the mentoring programme (rather than enrolling in a course). The mentee was matched with the Head of Research and Development at Siemens, who has expertise in developing business strategies, product development and managing teams and projects.

**MENTEE**

**Role:** Finance Director

**Organisation:** Howorth Air Technology

**Sector:** Air engineering

**Location:** Bolton

**Issue:** Support in new role with business and personal development

**MENTOR**

**Role:** Head of R&D

**Organisation:** Siemens

**Sector:** Manufacturing

**Location:** Congleton

**Experience:** Engineering, project management and business development

**Early in the programme, the pair discussed expectations to ensure they were both clear.** Both the mentor and mentee expected the mentoring to be focused on sharing knowledge and experience. With no prior mentoring experience, the mentee expected to improve their knowledge by gaining access to learning resources through conversations with the mentor. Initially the mentor did expect to be improving business performance in more technical areas (e.g. product design) but after discussion with the mentee, the mentoring focused on improving business strategy and employee engagement.

**Siemens is part of the supply chain for Howorth Air Technologies, so the match was relevant for both parties.** The mentee's request to be matched with a mentor within the same industry, but not in a financial role was met. As a result, the mentee felt the profile matching form was effective. According to the mentor, the mentee also had the seniority to be able to act on their discussions and implement changes. On personalities, the pair thought they were very well matched, with the mentor finding the mentee open to exploring new ideas and the mentee feeling more aware of new ways of working.

**Support for mentors and mentees through an online platform to access and share knowledge, learning and connect with others was suggested by the pair.** The mentor felt the programme was slightly less effective than the pilot in terms of the communication from BtB following the matching process. Both the mentee and mentor suggested an online platform would support the sustainability of the programme, ensuring good quality mentors and help mentees continue to develop, and transition into new mentors.





## PROCESS CASE STUDY

Next Recruitment is a recruitment agency based in Birmingham which sources temporary and permanent staff for industrial, warehouse, and commercial roles. In joining MfG, Next Recruitment's Director was seeking constructive challenge on the business strategy, particularly around developing goals and valuing employees. Through the Birmingham Growth Hub, the mentee was matched with the Managing Director at John Lewis Watford. The pair met mostly face to face, the first of which was at the mentee's business, and then these were supplemented by phone calls and emails in the intervening periods.

### Conversations between the mentor and BtB ensured a successful match between a mentee and mentor from different industries.

It was important to the mentee to be matched with a mentor outside the recruitment industry, to gain personalised advice rather than have pre-existing industry approaches suggested. Initially, the mentor was concerned that they may not have the knowledge or credibility to mentor businesses entirely different to their own. After talking with BtB about challenges mentees may face, the mentor saw these as very similar regardless of industry and felt confident it could be an appropriate match. The mentee was more willing to take the mentor's advice as the mentor had a neutral background being from a different industry.

**Both the mentor and mentee considered the matching process efficient and effective.** In terms of efficiency, the mentee was surprised how quickly the recruitment and matching occurred, 'within a matter of weeks'. Although the mentor's experience of the recruitment process was 'clunky' as there were IT problems with the profile form, the matching process was considered effective as the mentor's expertise in performance management was well matched with the mentee's business needs. The process was also considered effective by both due to the follow up contact by BtB to check if they thought it was a suitable partnership. Through these interactions, the pair were both confident they fully understood the programme they were joining.

**The mentoring process was more discursive than instructive which was unexpected but useful according to the mentee.** The mentee assumed the process would involve the mentor suggesting a 'list of improvements' which the mentee would then implement, increasing the mentee's awareness of new management practices, leading to improved business performance. Instead, the pair would have discussions (e.g. on employee performance) which the mentee then used to inform decisions about the business. While the mentee did not achieve specific outcomes set out with the mentor, the decisions made were based on the conversations they had together.

MENTEE	
Role:	Director
Organisation:	Next Recruitment
Sector:	Recruitment
Location:	Birmingham
Issue:	Support with business development and strategy


MENTOR	
Role:	Managing Director
Organisation:	John Lewis (JLP)
Sector:	Retail
Location:	Watford
Experience:	Business development and performance management



### PROCESS CASE STUDY

The mentee was the owner of Just Strong, a producer of women’s athleisure clothing based in Bolton. At the time of his application to Mentoring for Growth, the business was in its scale-up period, facing new demands on all sides of the business, ranging from marketing to logistics. They wanted support from a mentor with experience in a high-growth SME environment to guide them through the process of scaling up. The mentee was paired with the former Finance Director at Moonpig.com who was CFO at Be the Business during the mentoring relationship. The pair met over six months in a combination of formal face-to-face meetings and telephone calls that were supplemented with ad-hoc communication.

<b>MENTEE</b>		 JUSTSTRONG
<b>Role:</b>	Owner	
<b>Organisation:</b>	Just Strong	
<b>Sector:</b>	Retail	
<b>Location:</b>	Bolton	
<b>Issue:</b>	Scaling up in a high-growth environment	

<b>MENTOR</b>		
<b>Role:</b>	CFO	
<b>Organisation:</b>	Be the Business	
<b>Sector:</b>	Not-for-profit	
<b>Location:</b>	London	
<b>Experience:</b>	Large business & SME experience; knowledge of automation	

**The overall delivery of the programme was deemed to be very effective.** The mentee was matched with a mentor that provided management and leadership advice. In addition, the delivery was reported to be quite efficient. Some business improvements were realised in good time, but the relationship came to an early end when the mentor left Be the Business, potentially limiting the realisation of other benefits. **The matching process worked well but would have been improved by clearer communication.**

**Both were satisfied with the quality of the match made by the Manchester Growth Hub.** They had similar personalities - both were enthusiastic, driven and took a hands-on approach; and the mentor’s expertise was directly relevant to Just Strong, including knowledge of automation in an ecommerce SME. However, the match would have been improved by closer geographic proximity and more closely aligned expectations: the mentor was expecting to provide structured support to solve a specific issue, whereas the mentee wanted flexible support on a range of issues.

Consultees highlighted communication from Be the Business as the key area for improvement in programme delivery. The timeline of the process was not articulated at the outset, meaning neither were sure when they would be matched, how the matching process was progressing or when the relationship should “end”. When the mentoring relationship came to an early end, the mentee would have liked to continue on the programme but did not know how to request another mentor. The mentor had hoped that the Growth Hub would follow up with him to check if he was happy to finish the programme or would like to be rematched.

The quality of the match was seen to enable both positive individual and organisational benefits, including improved business planning, marketing strategy and staff management. Further still, the mentor’s expertise in automation had led to efficiency gains in Just Strong’s production line e.g. pre-printing the logos of the most popular products.



## EARLY IMPACT CASE STUDY

Fracino is a Birmingham based manufacturer of commercial coffee machines. At the time of engagement with the MfG programme the company's Managing Director (MD) was looking to expand its exports. The company sought support from Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, which recommended MfG. The mentee was paired with the Director of Retail Services within Waitrose. They were drawn to the programme in part because of the top-tier firms but the mentee also wanted a mentor with the right experience and approach this was subsequently received. They were satisfied that their mentor met these requirements.

The mentee considered the relationship to have been highly effective, a view shared by the mentor. They believed it helped provide a clear exporting strategy, which was implemented quickly; and the process helped identify other related organisational matters that the mentee had also been able to address. The success of the relationship was thought to be due to the mentor's approach, one of genuine interest, care and commitment. The mentee also commented on the mentor's efficiency, follow-ups and general concentrated effort.

The prime focus for the mentee was expanding its export turnover. Through discussions, both face to face (mentee and mentor sites) and by calls/emails, **a model was established which provided success in gaining entry to new overseas markets, namely Thailand and Singapore.** Subsequently the same model was implemented for other regions (including South Africa, Canada and the USA), and will provide access to new International markets. This all derived from the mentor's analysis, approach and commitment. It is too early to quote export turnover, but the mentee is delighted with the insight and subsequent plans and actions created.

What added extra value to the process was **the mentor's objectivity: they had the distance to identify improvements that could be made to organisational structures.** This resulted in a more streamlined and productive structure, involving more delegation, less crossovers of responsibilities, and effectively releasing the MD's time to be spent on more strategic and business development matters. The mentee felt his business was quite well focused on productivity measures anyway, as well as growth, but this new approach helped support his own efforts. Without the mentor, the organisational changes may never have been identified; and the exporting planning and actions would probably have taken longer, partly due to the mentee having less knowledge and confidence in the right exporting model. The mentor developed new awareness of leadership and management practices relating to organisational development and exporting, in particular how things might be done differently and better. His personal development has linked well to the business changes implemented, and the progress made against strategic plans.

### MENTEE



Role: Managing Director

Organisation: Fracino

Sector: Manufacturing

Location: Birmingham

Issue: Support with developing exporting plan

### MENTOR

JOHN LEWIS  
PARTNERSHIP

Role: Director of Retail Services

Organisation: Waitrose (JLP)

Sector: Retail

Location: London

Experience: Retail operations, e-commerce, procurement

### EARLY IMPACT CASE STUDY

The Site Supply Company based in Greater Manchester provides branded workwear, high visibility clothing and personal protective equipment to businesses across the UK. Their Director of Operations joined the programme as a mentee, having recently become a shareholder in the business. The mentee was initially looking for support in marketing/sales skills and personal development. However, as the mentoring relationship developed, the focus widened to include operational processes and employee engagement.

The Director of Operations was matched with the Director of Communications at John Lewis Partnership, who had expertise in developing communications strategies and previous experience managing flag-ship stores. The pair met monthly for half day sessions over a 12-month period, usually at Site Supply's premises, as the mentor found it helpful to be in the mentee's business to gain an operational and cultural perspective. Some sessions were held off-site in Manchester and included visits to the John Lewis Partnership facilities.

**The mentee adopted new operational processes and improved business performance based on the mentoring experience.** Following the tour of a John Lewis local warehouse arranged by the mentor, the mentee made several changes to the operation processes in Site Supply's warehouse. The new layout and storage space now used picking bins instead of shelving which has halved the space used to store products and reduces errors due to a new barcoding system which accompanied this change. New employees can now locate products more easily and quickly. The mentee thinks **these operational changes have occurred more easily, quickly and are of better quality, because of the input from the mentor.** At times, the mentee was unable to immediately implement some mentoring advice due to ongoing priority projects. Yet, the mentee thought if they could implement at least 50% of the advice given, it would greatly benefit the business, and the mentee would retain the rest of the information ready for when the business has grown further.

Reflecting on the mentee's current business growth trajectory, the mentee expects the annual turnover to increase by 7% from 2018/19 to 2019/20. The mentee recognised mentoring directly contributed partly to the increase in turnover. Importantly, **the mentee thinks the business productivity has improved as a result of the new efficient operational processes.** Critically, this was due to the good personal chemistry and sound levels of communication between the mentee and mentor.

<b>MENTEE</b>	
<b>Role:</b> Operations Director	
<b>Organisation:</b> The Site Supply Company	
<b>Sector:</b> Wholesale and retail	
<b>Location:</b> Stockport	
<b>Issue:</b> Support in marketing, operations and employment engagement	

<b>MENTOR</b>	
<b>Role:</b> Communications Director	
<b>Organisation:</b> JLP	
<b>Sector:</b> Retail	
<b>Location:</b> London	
<b>Experience:</b> Communication strategies, business development, and performance management	

## EARLY IMPACT CASE STUDY

Howorth Air Technology is a medical and pharmaceutical equipment manufacturer based in Bolton which specialises in engineering clean air ventilation systems and containment systems for hospitals and pharma companies. In early 2018, the mentee was appointed as Managing Director of the business following around 10 years heading the operations side. Some aspects of this new role were entirely new, so the mentee decided to seek further support through the Mentoring for Growth programme. The mentee was particularly drawn to the opportunity to get an external perspective on the business: *“If we only learn from people in this industry, we will only ever learn what we already know.”* The mentee was paired with a Commercial Director at GSK.

### **The mentee went into the relationship with an**

**open mind, and the areas he has received help with have evolved since applying.** The key areas of support related to formulating a strategy, people development, and marketing (including visual management). During the first twelve months of the relationship, the pair were in regular contact through a combination of face-to-face meetings and phone calls. The first two site visits to the mentee business involved the mentor walking around the site and speaking with employees across all levels. These visits were regarded as *“absolutely fundamental”* in creating a mutual understanding of what could be achieved through the mentoring relationship. The mentee has so far implemented several changes, including developing an improved apprenticeship scheme and setting out a clearer vision for the future.

**There have been a number of early benefits for the mentee** who felt that the experience had given him confidence in his role, enhanced his leadership and management skills, and introduced him to new professional networks. At the organisation level, the mentoring was considered to have led to improved business performance and productivity. The mentee attributed this to improvements in employee engagement, for which the mentor’s presence was critical: *“Having people like him coming in has raised people’s self-esteem. They are seeing a Commercial Director of one of GSK’s sites walk in and talk to them – there is just such positive morale around the place.”* Without the programme, these benefits would have occurred at a slower rate and lower scale.

**The experience has also been rewarding for the mentor.** Having worked in a large company for over 30 years, it has been interesting for him to see how quickly changes can be implemented in an SME. He has also involved some of his team members in the site visits to expose them to a different environment and stimulate new ideas, therefore also indirectly delivering benefit to GSK.

MENTEE	
Role:	Managing Director
Organisation:	Howorth Air Technology
Sector:	Air engineering
Location:	Bolton
Issue:	Support with various aspects of running the business, e.g. strategy

MENTOR	
Role:	Commercial Director
Organisation:	GSK
Sector:	Pharmaceutical
Location:	Ulverston
Experience:	Expertise in procurement, business development, finance, and IT

## EARLY IMPACT CASE STUDY

Closomat is a producer and manufacturer of wash and dry toilets that remove the need for carers, providing “dignity and independence to end users”. It was established in 1962 and sits in a group with two other companies. The business had seen considerable growth in the six months leading up to its involvement in Mentoring for Growth. The mentee was Director of Resources and was feeling “lost and frustrated” in their role at the company. The mentee applied to MfG for high-quality, objective mentoring support to help address HR issues within the company. The Manchester Growth Hub paired the mentee with the HR Director at Waitrose.

Closomat’s HR team worked across all three companies in the group. In practice, the team was overworked and could only provide transaction support to the mentee’s team, rather than strategic, e.g. it could process a P45 but could not offer guidance on a company restructure. The mentor acted as a sounding board to the mentee. They reviewed the Closomat HR strategy and supported the mentee to develop the business case to develop an inhouse HR function. The case was successfully pitched to the company board and Closomat’s internal HR department was established in April 2019. As a result of this, the mentee was appointed HR Director.

**With the mentor’s support, the mentee was more confident to pursue their ideas for the business.** The relationship introduced the mentee to a range of new HR practices (e.g. John Lewis’ annual review protocol) and business planning techniques (e.g. developing a business case). These changes led to direct improvements for Closomat. In their new position, **the mentee established an HR team and created new jobs:** after MfG, the employee count rose from 77 to 86 FTE. They implemented new line management structures, which articulated how and to whom colleagues were accountable and introduced an annual review process. In addition, the mentee learned how best to use automation, shifting more resource to elements of HR where human contribution added most value and adopting new software elsewhere.

**The benefits to the mentee and Closomat would not have occurred without the programme.** The mentor enabled the benefits: the mentee would not have been able to execute the new HR plans without the confidence they gained from the relationship – “I was very lost in the business before being paired with [the mentor]”. The personality match was very influential to the early effects: their relationship was open and honest, and the mentee genuinely trusted the mentor. This dynamic gave the mentoring relationship traction and encouraged positive results.

The mentor expected to learn from their mentee through the programme. The pair had different personalities and professional experience, which provided them with valuable external insights and perspectives. They were impressed by how quickly decisions were made and implemented in an SME environment.

MENTEE		closomat
Role:	Director of Resources	
Organisation:	Closomat	
Sector:	Manufacturing	
Location:	Salisbury	
Issue:	High-growth company seeking support with HR	

MENTOR		JOHN LEWIS PARTNERSHIP
Role:	HR Director	
Organisation:	Waitrose (JLP)	
Sector:	Manufacturing	
Location:	Bracknell	
Experience:	HR and business planning	

## EARLY IMPACT CASE STUDY

Clifton Trade Bathrooms is a bathroom product supplier based with 18 depot sites across Yorkshire. It was established in 2005 and currently has over 160 employees and £12m annual turnover. The mentee, its Commercial Manager, applied to MfG when the business was going through a period of rapid growth. The mentee was concerned that their skills and experience might not meet the business' changing needs. The programme was suggested to them by a senior colleague who had previously been mentored and found it beneficial. Following this they applied through The Growth Company and in December 2018 they were matched with a senior leader from John Lewis Partnership.

The mentee joined the programme with an open mind and without expectations. **Over six face-to-face meetings the pair had mainly worked through short- and medium- term issues relating to Clifton Trade Bathroom's marketing and people management issues.** The mentee went into each meeting with a clear objective, which enabled them to have constructive, focussed discussions. Initially the mentee was doubtful as to whether the mentor's retail experience would be applicable to theirs. However, the mentor was able to give insights from their own professional experience and both parties felt that they were well matched in terms of fit of expertise with Clifton Trade Bathroom's requirements and personality.

**With the mentor's support, the mentee experienced personal development and organisational benefits.** The mentee reported increased awareness of management and leadership practices and were more confident to implement them – for example, the mentee was more effective at delegating within their team and was encouraged to pursue their own ideas. The programme also offered the mentee an opportunity to reflect on her role – *“it has been nice to be able to take myself out of the business and chat to someone”*. These personal benefits led to positive organisational effects for Clifton Trade Bathrooms. The business adopted improved leadership and management practices and productivity gains: more effective management meant that employees were more effective with their time.

The benefits to the mentee and their organisation were accelerated and of a higher quality as a result of MfG. The nature of the mentoring relationship was particularly influential: the quality of the match meant that the mentoring was enjoyable and productive. The mentor also reported benefits from the relationship: it had given them an opportunity to reflect on how things operate within John Lewis Partnership and led them to question whether there were opportunities for efficiency gains.

MENTEE	
Role:	Commercial Manager
Organisation:	Clifton Trade Bathrooms
Sector:	Retail
Location:	Manchester
Issue:	Support with various aspects of running the business, e.g. marketing

MENTOR	
Role:	Head of Unit
Organisation:	John Lewis (JLP)
Sector:	Retail
Location:	London
Experience:	Expertise in talent development

## PROCESS CASE STUDY

Finlay James is a technology sales and digital recruitment company. The company's CEO had been at Finlay James since it was established in 2003. Despite the CEO's experience, there was much to learn regarding overseas expansion and team management, particularly as the company goes through a period of growth. The mentee joined the Mentoring for Growth programme in January 2019 and was subsequently matched with the Vice President F-35 Sustainment at BAE systems. The mentor hoped to develop his own skillset through the programme, to "give something back" and help an SME to develop in three key areas: internationalisation, business strategy and growth.


**The matching was deemed efficient from both perspectives in terms of the time committed and the quality of the outcome.**

Following an initial call with Be the Business, the mentor felt relaxed about the process and was confident in starting the discussion with the mentee. The mentee felt similarly at ease with the process, noting trust in the techniques that Be the Business would use to make the match. This was enhanced by the fact that there was no pressure for the first match to work – it had been made clear to the mentee that it was a flexible process with the opportunity to provide feedback and change mentor. The mentee suggested the chances of this happening could be reduced by profiling the mentors with a short video explaining who they are.

In this case, however, **there were no such issues, with both the mentor and mentee found it an effective match.** Coming from similar backgrounds and having a compatible style of communication enabled a mentoring relationship based on open and honest dialogue, allowing them to focus on the issues at hand. Consequently, the mentor felt that they had helped the mentee overcome people management and business strategy challenges, whilst developing their own delivery style in the process. For example, the mentor learned how to motivate people to work harder and add more value. Similarly, the mentee's expectations of the programme were met – the mentee was motivated to address the company's values and structures, deal with problematic aspects of overseas expansion and resolve staff issues.

In addressing these issues, the pair have met face to face three times since they were matched in January and plan to meet again before in December 2019. The mentee noted that these sessions did not involve any input from Be the Business and that they were very much left to their own accords. He thinks that in this case, the "hand-off" approach worked well, but in other pairs it may not be so effective. This lack of communication, post-match, was also raised by the mentor who suggested that it could be problematic with regards to mentor retention.

<b>MENTEE</b> 	
<b>Role:</b>	CEO
<b>Organisation:</b>	Finlay James
<b>Sector:</b>	Technology sales & recruitment
<b>Location:</b>	Manchester
<b>Issue:</b>	Overseas expansion, people management and business strategy

<b>MENTOR</b> 	
<b>Role:</b>	Director
<b>Organisation:</b>	BAE Systems
<b>Sector:</b>	Defence & security
<b>Location:</b>	Preston
<b>Experience:</b>	Commercial experience, incl. working in foreign markets and in startups





### PROCESS CASE STUDY

Finlay James, based in Manchester, is a technology sales recruitment company, in business since 2003. At the time of engagement with the Mentoring for Growth programme in October 2018, the company's Managing Director was seeking a different perspective from a larger company mentor on a number of HR processes and thinking. These included staff and client retention, maximising the potential of the team, as well as general business management matters. The mentee was paired with a Senior Manager from Technical Risk within KPMG. **Both mentee and mentor had an interest in technology, being the mentee's business focus (technology recruitment) and the mentor's core role (providing consultancy support to enterprises in this field).**

**MENTEE**

**FinlayJames**

**Role:** Managing Director

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**Organisation:** Finlay James

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**Sector:** Technology sales & recruitment

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**Location:** Manchester

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**Issue:** People management, client retention and general business management.

**MENTOR**

**Role:** Senior Manager, Technical Risk

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**Organisation:** KPMG

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**Sector:** Financial services

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**Location:** Liverpool

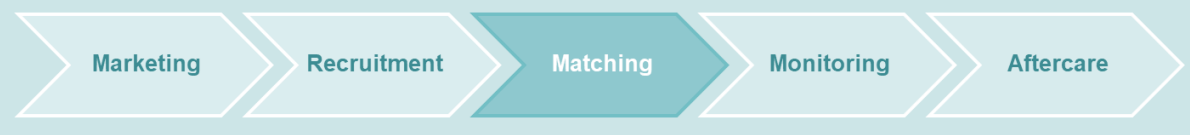
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**Experience:** Technology development

One of the most beneficial and useful aspects of the process was that the pair always met for breakfast or lunch meetings off site, quarterly on average. Both were located reasonably close to one another which made this a feasible option. As a result, all interactions were face to face, and while working through itemised items, also lent a sense of informality. The mentoring relationship lasted for 12 months, and their view was that the engagement and early benefits (e.g. the focus on culture and values influencing staff retention and recruitment) would not have been as strong if conducted in any other fashion than face to face.


**The matching seems to a degree to have been based on common interest in technology.** Both felt the match was strong, both were well committed, and the mentee derived benefits from the discussions. They felt there was a strong match in terms of personality and seniority. However, in retrospect the mentee wondered whether if he had been more specific in the profiling, he might have had a more specifically aligned match for his needs i.e. HR related, not technology. The mentee viewed this as perhaps being a large company's HR Director. Such a match might even have increased the number of sessions held.

The mentee believes however that it was his responsibility to be specific in the programme application stage, and **this could be a lesson for the profiling process and how it is completed, to consider real needs and the 'ideal mentor'**. The mentee received very good input from the mentor, new confidence and new approaches, all particularly in the area of company values and culture, with specific learning to do with selection and interviews and articulating company values better; based on his learning the mentee was able to implement new thinking in his own recruitment and retention processes which should in turn support higher productivity within the business.



### EARLY IMPACT CASE STUDY

Degree 53 is a user experience ('UX') design and software development company based in Manchester. It has been operational for six years and currently employs 142 people. Its Operations Director, who was relatively new to the role, was informed about the Mentoring for Growth programme by the Manchester Growth Hub and decided to take part to obtain an outside perspective on the business. The mentee was matched with an Engagement Manager from McKinsey, who is based in London. The mentor specialises in financial services and digital technology sectors and has a keen interest in Fintech. The mentee originally expected a mentor who was based in the North-West and had experience growing a small business within the Technology industry. Nonetheless, the relationship was felt to be very positive.

<b>MENTEE</b> 	
<b>Role:</b>	Operations Director
<b>Organisation:</b>	Degree 53
<b>Sector:</b>	Software Development & UX Design
<b>Location:</b>	Manchester
<b>Issue:</b>	Various, e.g. strategy, business development, team management

<b>MENTOR</b> 	
<b>Role:</b>	Engagement Manager
<b>Organisation:</b>	McKinsey & Company
<b>Sector:</b>	Consultancy
<b>Location:</b>	London
<b>Experience:</b>	Financial services and digital technology (Fintech)

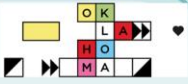
Both the mentor and mentee felt that, in terms of personality, level of seniority and experience they were a good match. The mentee noted the mentor was very enthusiastic, supportive, and able to provide helpful inputs and advice. In fact, the mentor exemplified the qualities that made for a good mentor, according to the mentee, including an ability to ask the right types of questions, listen to what the mentee wanted to discuss, remember key details and be flexible around the scheduling. Both found that the only negative aspect was that, due to distances, they had not yet met in person.

At each meeting, different business issues were discussed identified by the mentee. This covered areas such as team management, business development including the strategic expansion of Degree 53's client base, and work-life balance. The mentor provided an external perspective, suggesting ways the mentee could approach these issues. The mentee implemented several of the mentor's recommended actions following their meetings. For example, following discussions on the business' approach to targeted marketing, the mentee **conducted a sales and marketing process review**. In addition, the mentoring enabled the mentee to **develop a new business strategy** that has since been adopted. The mentor also provided advice regarding the **management of a team member** that allowed the mentee to foster more productive relationships within the organisation.


Whilst these benefits may have been realised anyway, the mentee noted that having a third-party 'sounding board' accelerated their realisation. However, the mentor raised that they could have adopted a more systematic approach, acknowledging that visiting Degree 53 to gain a more holistic understanding of the business would have been better. Through the programme, the mentor developed further mentoring and team-management skills, as well as an awareness of the software developed by Degree 53. The mentor would also have liked to have spent time learning from fintech-related issues within the mentee's business as well.

### EARLY BENEFITS CASE STUDY

The mentee was the co-owner of Oklahoma, an independent, family-run boutique for homeware, fashion and gifts, based in central Manchester. The business has been established for 23 years and is now the largest independent gift store in Manchester. The mentee applied to the Mentoring for Growth (MfG) programme after a period of high firm-growth, which has led to people management and logistical issues. With the help of a mentor, the mentee was hoping to address these issues by establishing a clear management structure that would support further growth and encourage clearer communication channels. Mentoring was considered to be an appropriate intervention for the business because it offered personal, tailored support.

MENTEE	
Role:	Co-owner 
Organisation:	Oklahoma
Sector:	Retail
Location:	Manchester
Issue:	People management, establishing a managements structure.

MENTOR	
Role:	Head of business valuation 
Organisation:	EY
Sector:	Professional services
Location:	Knutsford
Experience:	Business valuation, corporation reorganisation,

The mentee was drawn to MfG by the wide range of mentors on offer: they had a diverse range of backgrounds from a breadth of top-tier firms. Ideally, the mentee wanted a mentor from a different sector to provide a new perspective on the business itself. The Manchester Growth Hub paired them with a partner from EY, whose focus was on commercial and intellectual property valuations. The mentoring relationship was ongoing at the time of consultation and comprised five face-to-face meetings lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours. Meetings had been held at both parties' premises.

**With the mentor's support, the mentee had increased awareness of management and leadership practices and was more confident in their management and leadership abilities.**

The mentor introduced the mentee to possible management hierarchy structures and supported the Oklahoma's transition to a management structure that better suited its stage of growth. The mentor also helped the mentee to clearly articulate the business' aims and identify the critical 'next steps'; and suggested techniques to manage the dynamics of a family business. This led to more effective communication within the business. between retail staff and management. These outcomes resulted in improved productivity because employees understood what was expected of them and knew who they should report to, meaning that worker engagement improved.

In the absence of MfG, **the benefits would still have occurred but at a slower rate.** The mentee expected that they could have learned some of the management and leadership practices from other sources (e.g. online and other business support programmes). The nature of the mentoring relationship was considered to be an important factor in the speed and quality of the programme's benefits. The mentor's honest and direct support enabled the benefits. In terms of programme improvements, the mentee suggested that it would be beneficial to have some mentors from SMEs, who can more easily relate to the challenges and agility of other small companies.