

Relational Mentoring Scotland - building strong relationships to support personal growth, confidence, and long-term positive outcomes (an evolving review of practice, outcomes, and learning).

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

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Title	Relational Mentoring Scotland - building strong relationships to support personal growth, confidence, and long-term positive outcomes (an evolving review of practice, outcomes, and learning).
Lead Organisation	The Wise Group.
All Organisations	We deliver the service with hundreds of supporting referral and delivery partners.
Category	Promising; the project has yet to be formally evaluated in any capacity.
Poverty Impact	Prevent. Reduce. Mitigate. Raising Awareness.
Introduction to the Project	
Relational Mentoring Scotland (RMS) provides whole-household, one-to-one relational support to families experiencing poverty, instability and multiple disadvantage. The service supports households to improve stability, wellbeing, financial resilience, and progression towards sustainable employment. RMS recognises that poverty is interconnected and that families are often navigating multiple pressures simultaneously including debt, housing insecurity, poor mental health, caring responsibilities, and economic inactivity. Through trusted relationships and long-term mentoring, the service helps families engage with services, overcome barriers and build sustainable progress.	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	No one person developed the idea. The project idea was developed by the Wise Group's frontline staff experiences and feedback. This highlighted that single-issue interventions failed because families were exposed to multiple interconnected pressures simultaneously, with no single point of contact.
How did the idea for the project come about?	
Relational Mentoring Scotland was developed in response to increasing evidence that poverty is rarely caused by a single issue and that many families experience multiple interconnected pressures at the same time. The Wise Group's frontline experience showed that traditional single-issue interventions often struggled to create sustained change because families were simultaneously navigating debt, poor mental health, insecure housing, caring responsibilities, financial instability and barriers to employment. The service was therefore designed as a relational, whole-household approach focused on stability, trust, coordination and long-term progression	
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	Yes
• Data, learning, insight and evaluation from the Wise Group's wider Relational Mentoring model. • Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty priorities. • Best Start, Bright Futures. • Evidence on trauma-informed and person-centred practice. • Whole-family and preventative approaches. • Operational evidence gathered across all our services.	
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Not specified at this point in time.

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Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes
People with relatable experience contribute to the delivery and development of the service through frontline insight, community engagement and lived experience perspectives that help shape relational practice and service understanding.		
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?		Not specified at this point in time.
Which organisation provided funding?		
How much was required?		
What was the specific source of funding?		
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?		Not specified at this point in time.
Staff/Volunteer Time		
Facilities / Workspace		
Equipment		
Local Knowledge		
Food and Drink		
Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?		Not specified at this point in time.
Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?		Not specified at this point in time.
How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?	Not specified at this point in time.	
Who made the decision to introduce the project?	Not specified at this point in time.	

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Early Development

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?	No.
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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Are potential users referred to the project?	Yes.
- Families access the service through referrals from schools, nurseries, health services, local authorities, housing organisations, employability providers, community organisations, energy companies, emergency services and self-referral. - Mentors maintain regular and flexible contact through phone, text, email, online engagement and face-to-face support depending on the needs of the household. - The service is designed around continuity, trust and sustained engagement rather than short-term programme timelines.	
Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your Not specified at this point in time.?	Not specified at this point in time.
What is the most common way through which users typically access your services?	
Through direct contact and personal interaction.	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?	Yes.
Not specified at this point in time.	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	Yes.
People with relatable experience contribute to the delivery and development of the service through frontline insight, community engagement and lived experience perspectives that help shape relational practice and service understanding.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u>?	No.
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?	No.

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Maria Ruponen.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	No
Not specified at this point in time.	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Most of it.	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	No.
Who is involved?	
How does it work?	
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	Yes.
Relational Mentoring Scotland operates within the Wise Group's formal governance structure, including Board oversight, operational performance review and strategic reporting. The service aligns strongly with - • The Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. • Best Start, Bright Futures. • Public service reform and prevention agendas. • Whole-family wellbeing approaches. • No One Left Behind ambitions. • The service contributes to Scotland's wider ambition to reduce child poverty, strengthen families and reduce long-term pressure on public services.	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	No.
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	Not specified at this point in time.
Is the project part of any other strategy?	No.
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	Not specified at this point in time.
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	No.
In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	
Not specified at this point in time.	

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Funding

Is funding used to support the work?	Relational Mentoring Scotland is funded through the Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Fund. The longer-term ambition is to continue scaling relational and whole-family approaches through stronger integration with local services, public sector reform agendas and preventative approaches to reducing poverty and economic inactivity.
Has external funding been secured to support the work?	Not specified at this point in time.
Which organisation provided funding?	Not specified at this point in time.
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Not specified at this point in time.
How much funding was secured?	Not specified at this point in time.
For how long has funding been secured?	Not specified at this point in time.
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?	Not specified at this point in time.
Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?	Not specified at this point in time.
What are these conditions?	Not specified at this point in time.
Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?	Not specified at this point in time.
How much funding was secured?	Not specified at this point in time.
For how long has funding been secured?	Not specified at this point in time.

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Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?	Not specified at this point in time.
Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?	Not specified at this point in time.
What are these conditions?	Not specified at this point in time.
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	
Not specified at this point in time.	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?	Not specified at this point in time.
Role:	
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?	Not specified at this point in time.
Extra hours worked:	
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?	Not specified at this point in time.
Role:	
Is the post permanent or fixed term?	Not specified at this point in time.
Duration:	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project??	Not specified at this point in time.
Role:	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?	Not specified at this point in time.
Facilities / Workspace	
Equipment	
Local Knowledge	
Food and Drink	
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	Not specified at this point in time.
Who provides:	

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Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	Not specified at this point in time.
Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	Not specified at this point in time.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?	The Wise Group collects detailed service and outcomes data through its REMY case management and insight platform. The service monitors - • household demographics • presenting needs and barriers • household stability indicators • progression outcomes • customer journeys and case studies • service engagement patterns. The evidence generated through RMS is helping build understanding of how relational support contributes to stability, progression and public service integration. The service is also contributing to wider organisational learning around prevention, household complexity and systems reform.
Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	Not specified at this point in time.
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	Not specified at this point in time.

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Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project	Not specified at this point in time.
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation	Not specified at this point in time.
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project	Not specified at this point in time.
What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?	
Number of users	Not specified at this point in time.
Profile of users	Not specified at this point in time.
Experience of users	Not specified at this point in time.
Outcomes for users	Not specified at this point in time.
Anything else	Not specified at this point in time.
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	Not specified at this point in time.
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	No.
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	No.

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Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	No.
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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?

Relational Mentoring Scotland is making strong progress towards achieving its aims.

To date, the service has -

- Supported over 4,000 households across Scotland.
- Supported households including more than 4,500 children.
- Demonstrated that over 80% of families are experiencing three or more issues simultaneously.
- Improved overall household stability, with nearly four in five households moving into greater stability following support.
- Helped reduce crisis-level need while improving resilience and engagement with services.
- Generated a growing evidence base on what it takes to move families from instability towards sustainable progress.

The service demonstrates that poverty is interconnected and that trusted relational support can improve outcomes across multiple areas of family life.

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What difference has the project made?	
Not specified at this point in time.	
Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?	Not specified at this point in time.
Has the project changed through time?	Not specified at this point in time.
What changed	
Why has it changed	
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	Not specified at this point in time.
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	Not specified at this point in time.

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?

The relational mentoring approach is working well because it focuses on trust, continuity and whole-household support rather than isolated interventions.

Key strengths include -

- Personalised and relationship-based support.
- Strong partnership working across services.
- Flexibility around household needs.
- The ability to stabilise families experiencing multiple pressures.
- Use of data and insight to improve delivery and identify emerging need.

What, if anything, is working less well?

- Like many preventative services, the service operates within shorter-term funding cycles despite supporting long-term change.
- Demand and complexity have increased significantly due to the cost-of-living crisis, rising economic insecurity and growing pressure on public services.

What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?

Key learning from Relational Mentoring Scotland includes -

- Poverty is interconnected and rarely exists as a single issue.
- Stability is often the foundation for sustainable employment and progression.
- Trust and continuity are critical to effective support.
- Whole-family and relational approaches improve engagement and outcomes.
- Prevention requires integration across services and long-term thinking.
- Data should be used not only to describe need but to shape public service reform.

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Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	Yes.
The Wise Group intends to continue developing and scaling relational mentoring approaches across Scotland and beyond. Future priorities include - • Strengthening integration with local public services. • Expanding whole-family employability approaches. • Deepening evidence and learning around prevention and household stability. • Supporting wider policy and system reform discussions around poverty reduction and economic inclusion.	
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?	
Not specified at this point in time.	
Not specified at this point in time.	
Not specified at this point in time.	

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