

# My Academic Family 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)

- [Initial Idea](#)
- [Early Development of the Project](#)
- [Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users](#)
- [Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty](#)
- [Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working](#)
- [Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Staffing and Resources](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Reach and Impact](#)
- [Learning from Experience](#)

<b>Title</b>	My Academic Family
<b>Organisation</b>	My Academic Family
<b>Category</b>	Emerging Practice
<b>Poverty Impact</b>	Mitigation and Prevention
<b>Introduction to the Project</b>	
My Academic Family is a social enterprise that provides information and support to first-generation students in Glasgow. It provides one-to-one support orientated to help “new” students understand the academic environment to maximize their High Education experience. The support includes recognition of university opportunities, strategies for managing stress and anxiety, strategies for getting better academic and social outcomes, and care mechanisms for first-generation students.	

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Initial Idea

<b>Who had the initial idea?</b>
Carolyn developed the idea from her experience as a first-generation student
<b>How did the idea for the project come about?</b>
Carolyn identified that first-generation students face different challenges during their studies, which affect their university experience and how people ask for help and support. She observed that people from low income backgrounds were more familiar with asking for help and obtaining support. Still, other students felt shy or intimidated, so they isolated themselves from the different support networks and programs of the universities
<b>Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?</b> <i>If so, please add details to the box below.</i>
During Carolyn's Masters in Adult Education, she gained theoretical knowledge about designing and delivering support to adult learners. The modules on continuing community education and multiculturalism and education were keystones for increasing her understanding of the barriers, challenges and best strategies to engage and help. Also, her recent experience as a volunteer in supporting refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK provided her lived experience on the best way to deliver and engage in a project as my Academic Family.
<b>Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>
The Student Enterprise program at Glasgow University provided an incubator ecosystem that allowed the project to get more experience in business management and successfully apply for funding opportunities. First Support Fund, a Scottish charity that supports businesses and social enterprises, was then involved by providing funding.

## My Academic Family How-to Guide

<b>Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	
No.	
<b>What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?</b>	
First Support Fund.	
<b>What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	
Facilities	None. All the project was set up online
Equipment	Computer
Local Knowledge	Friends and volunteer experience.
Food and Drink	No
<b>What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communicating a clear idea of what the project does: it has been challenging to advertise the project and explain what a mentorship is and its scope.</li> <li>2. Inclusion as a support service in the university: since the launch of the project, communication within the university's support services has been difficult as they perceive the project as a menace that rivals their "in-house" support programs.</li> <li>3. informing new users of the project</li> </ol>	
<b>What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	
Voice-to-voice contacts were necessary for setting the initial approaches with secondary students. Offering support free for refugees and students from low income backgrounds also helped to gain more visibility.	
<b>What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?</b>	
4 years.	

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



Who made the decision to introduce the project?

Carolyn

[Return to Introduction](#)



## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Early Development of the Project

<b>Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?</b>	
The project didn't have a pilot or feasibility project, but Carolyn ran informally different coaching and mentoring activities that shaped the project, which could be interpreted as a "pilot project".	
<b>What did you do? Please describe the pilot project or feasibility study.</b>	
The activities were a be-friend system that allow any student to contact someone to chat, and explore the different support programs available at the university. Most of the people that participated were in a vulnerable position as they were facing a low education performance due the challenges they were facing (i.e. isolation, depression, and financial), a position that was jeopardizing their permanence in their university course.	
<b>Who was involved in the work of the pilot or feasibility study?</b>	
Carolyn provided the service initially, and later got involved with a wider mentoring organisation in the US, called Scholar March.	
<b>How, if at all, were those with lived experience of poverty involved in the pilot of the project or feasibility study?</b>	
No.	
<b>What funding was used, if any, for the pilot of the project or feasibility study?</b>	
These activities didn't have any funding.	
<b>What in-kind resources were used for the pilot of the project or feasibility study?</b>	
<b>Facilities</b>	N.A.
<b>Equipment</b>	N.A.
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	N.A.
<b>Food and Drink</b>	N.A.

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



**Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated? *If yes, please provide details***

No

**What evidence, if any, from the pilot project was used to confirm that it was working?**

As it was a be-friend system, there was a closer relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The success of the activities was evidenced as all the people who was supported during this period stayed and successfully finished their studies.

**Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?**

Carolyn

**How did the pilot or feasibility study inform the final design of the project?**

Not applicable

[Return to Introduction](#)

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

**Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)**

My Academic Family doesn't have a referral system. Most service users engage directly with the project through its website or direct contact with Carolyn; sometimes, a former mentee recommends the project to new service users. Refugees and people seeking asylum contact Carolyn through the charity Inclusive Homework Club in Glasgow.

**How are potential clients made aware of the project?**

My Academic Family promotes its services through indirect means (social media and mailing lists) and direct means such as college and university stalls, information material distributed in charities, and voice-to-voice experiences.

**How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?**

Currently, most contact with the service users is made by email. The project uses social media for posting information, but their response hasn't been as expected. However, there are plans to create an online forum to facilitate the interaction between the service users, the volunteers/mentors and the project.

[Return to Introduction](#)

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

**Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in delivering the project? *If so, please describe below.***

Yes. Some volunteers were first-generation students who mentor others by sharing their experiences as students. By providing their stories, they help the mentees to put their concerns into words, develop means to identify their circumstances and journey, understand the best way to access the support they require and find the paths available according to their particular circumstances.

**Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in managing the project or project governance? *If so, please describe below.***

No

**Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in any other aspect of the project? *If so, please describe below.***

No.

[Return to Introduction](#)



## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

<b>Who is responsible for managing the project?</b>
Carolyn Carter as the founder and manager
<b>Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i></b>
Yes.
<b>Is there a Project Steering Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i></b>
No
<b>If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?</b>
The principal agreement is the Training and Guidance handbook provided to the volunteers. This document was co-produced by the volunteers and the manager, and it compiles the best practices for delivering the mentoring services. Also, there are regular follow-up sessions between the manager and the volunteers to check the project's delivery (i.e., challenges, concerns, etc.).

[Return to Introduction](#)

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

**Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? *If so, please give details.***

No.

**Is the project part of any other strategy? *If so, please give details.***

Yes, the project received funds from Glasgow Business Gateway. This service has been bonded into Glasgow's Action Plan for Change, where Business Gateway supports micro-businesses that deliver projects that tackle poverty in the city.

**Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. *If so, please give details.***

No.

[Return to Introduction](#)

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Funding

<b>Who funds the project? <i>Please give details.</i></b>
The project received support from Glasgow Business Gateway and currently works under a model of paid mentorship. Those receiving mentorship pay a monthly fee. Only refugees and people seeking asylum are not required to pay.
<b>How much does the project cost?</b>
N/A.
<b>Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?</b>
No.

[Return to Introduction](#)

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Staffing and Resources

**Which partners are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?**

The project received Glasgow Business Gateway's support, which helped to set up a social enterprise business plan. Also, they are a member of the Scottish Mentoring Network, which provides training to mentoring programmes and visibility of the different mentoring projects in Scotland.

The project also closely relates to the entrepreneurship programs at the University of Glasgow, being part of the Summer Start-Up Workshop Programme, delivered by the Student Enterprise Programme. This program provided contact with similar start-ups and some business training for organising the project's structure.

My Academic Family is exploring the possibilities of joining new partnerships with the private sector through the social responsibility model.

**Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?**

Currently, only the manager.

**Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? *Please describe their role and their contribution.***

The project is delivered through the volunteers in the role of mentors. Most volunteers have lived experience as first-generation students, or in other cases, they have experience in the corporate world. They deliver the mentorship following the guides explained in the volunteer guidance book.

**What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?**

<b>Facilities</b>	No
<b>Equipment</b>	No
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Experience in studying for a university degree, Community Interest Company management
<b>Food and Drink</b>	No

**For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?**

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



<b>Facilities</b>	N/A
<b>Equipment</b>	N/A
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	My academic family provides a guidebook and training.
<b>Food and Drink</b>	N/A
<b>Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? <i>Please describe below.</i></b>	
Developed a website	
<b>Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? <i>If so, please describe.</i></b>	
N/A	

[Return to Introduction](#)

# My Academic Family How-to Guide



## Monitoring and Evaluation

<b>What information, if any, do you collect about your project?</b>	
<b>Number of users</b>	Yes
<b>Profile of users</b>	Yes
<b>Experience of users</b>	Yes
<b>Anything else</b>	N/A.
<b>How often is data collected? Who collects the data?</b>	
The performance information is collected every month after the sessions between the General Manager and the volunteers.	
<b>Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? <i>Please describe the type of baseline data that you have.</i></b>	
No.	
<b>Do you produce an annual report? <i>Please provide details of what this includes.</i></b>	
As the project started in 2022 it hasn't produced an annual report.	
<b>In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?</b>	
The data will be used to show the project's positive impact, so it can be used as case studies for funding opportunities.	
<b>Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? <i>If yes, please provide details.</i></b>	
No.	



## My Academic Family How-to Guide



**Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future? *If yes, please provide details.***

Not planned.

[Return to Introduction](#)

## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Reach and Impact

<b>What difference has the project made?</b>
The project encourages people to continue and keep their studies despite the barriers and challenges of their socioeconomic background. It builds students' confidence not only for applying to higher education degrees, but also provides a safety net for creating a positive experience during their studies.
<b>How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?</b>
Anecdotal evidence of secondary students who successfully applied to universities and colleges.
<b>To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?</b>
The increased number of volunteer mentors and the rate of successful applications show the project's potential.
<b>How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?</b>
One of the most significant changes is the need to support refugees and people seeking asylum in applying to higher university degrees under the platform of colleges and Universities of Sanctuary - <a href="https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/">https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/</a>
<b>If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? <i>Please describe and explain below.</i></b>
My Academic Family is expanding by exploring how to get involved in refugees' support networks, such as STAR (Student Action for Refugees) and EaCES (Estranged and care-Experienced Students) which help refugees and people seeking asylum on the path to higher education in the UK. However it is still too soon to evaluate the capacity of My Academic Family to deliver this service.
<b>Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? <i>If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.</i></b>
No
<b>In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.</b>



## My Academic Family How-to Guide



Under the project's current stage, measuring the impact of tackling child poverty is challenging. My Academic Family helped a couple of people to successfully apply and enter to higher education.

[Return to Introduction](#)



## My Academic Family How-to Guide



### Learning from Experience

<b>What is working well?</b>
My Academic Family is building new partnerships to increase the project's visibility. The manager highlighted the partnership with Education Evolved, which allows them to promote their work. Also, they got a partnership with Snazzy Creative, which is a digital design company that helped in the design of the website and construction of the brand and marketing campaigns.
<b>What, if anything, is working less well?</b>
The involvement with the Student Union and other services that offer support to university students has been more difficult than expected. Also, communicating effectively to high-education students about mentorship has been challenging. Many students do not perceive the need to have a mentor or misunderstand the role and how it can benefit their experience.
<b>What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?</b>
N/A
<b>What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?</b>
N/A
<b>How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?</b>
Don't know.

[Return to Introduction](#)