

<b>Pilot Evaluation Summary</b>	
Intervention Developer	Birkenhead Sixth Form College
Delivery Organisations	Birkenhead Sixth Form College
Evaluator	IFF Research
Principal Investigator	Claire Johnson, Research Director
Protocol Author(s)	Claire Johnson, Research Director; Kelsey Beninger, Research Director; Libby Eastwood, Associate Director (Evaluation Manager)
Pilot Intervention Recipients	College students aged 16-19 who have or have had a social worker within the past six years (approx. 40)
Pilot Evaluation Participants	College students – 15 College staff managing and/or delivering the programme – approx. 4 Other college staff – 4-6 Parents or carers of college students - 6 Wider stakeholders (e.g. social workers, Local Authority EHCP/ SEND officer, Virtual School Head) - 3-5
Number of Pilot Sites	One sixth form college - Birkenhead Sixth Form College is a mainstream, state funded senior school for mixed in Wirral, Merseyside, England.
Protocol Date	October 2021
Version	1

## Summary

This document outlines the pilot evaluation of the **Progress Mentor (PM) Programme** at Birkenhead Sixth Form College (BSFC).

The PM programme was created in 2018 when a gap in support for students with experience of children's services was identified by the college. The programme started in September 2019 and involves a full time equivalent college-based PM, who provides bespoke support during term time to 20 - 40 young people aged 16-19. Following agreement from WWCS to fund the programme, the eligibility criteria was defined as young people who have or have had a social worker within the past six years.

Under the programme, each young person will have an individualised package of support, including access (if required) to supplementary Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support provided by the college's Learning Support team and specialist mentoring. It is a holistic programme delivered to a specific cohort at individual rather than class or setting level. The PM role includes liaison with parents or carers, teachers and other support staff at the college (such as careers advisors and pastoral support workers), and stakeholders outside of the college including social workers and representatives of other external agencies that the student may be involved with. For example, debt advice, housing and health practitioners. Following an increase in students with a social worker joining the college, the PM role was further developed to include attendance at children's social care meetings.

The programme is being evaluated by IFF Research. It is a pilot evaluation which will cover the 2021/22 academic year, when the college anticipates there will be approximately 40 young people receiving support. The evaluation is a process evaluation focusing on understanding the implementation, process, mechanisms and how and why it works (or not) to support students. The pilot evaluation will also explore indicative evidence of outcomes, where possible. Given the nature of the programme and the scope of the evaluation, these will be short-term outcomes only.

The evaluation will focus on programme delivery between September 2021 and July 2022. During this period, programme participants will include both continuing students (in the second year of their courses, who started in September 2020) and a new intake of students who started in September 2021. An evaluation report will be submitted in September 2022.

## Background and Problem Statement

Young people who have a social worker perform worse on average than their peers at every stage of their education and face barriers to securing positive post-education destinations.<sup>1</sup> The DfE's Children in Need Data Review (2019) found that, in 2018, students who had a social worker in the year of their GCSEs were almost five times less likely to enter higher education (HE) at age 18 than their peers.<sup>2</sup> By age 21, half of young people with a social worker had not yet achieved Level 2 qualifications (which include GCSEs), compared to 11% of those not involved with a social worker.

The reasons for poorer performance amongst students with experience of children's services compared with their peers, include having higher rates of SEND, lack of positive role models,

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<sup>1</sup> DfE Improving the educational outcomes of Children in Need of help and protection (2018)

<sup>2</sup> DfE, Help, protection, education: concluding the Children in Need Review (2019).

lower expectations from adults in their lives, concerns about affordability of education, and lack of guidance about how to find and apply for opportunities.<sup>3</sup> The transition from school to further education (FE) and HE can also be challenging for students with experience of children's services, as it often involves moving to a bigger site and to a timetable that places much more emphasis on individual responsibility to attend classes and complete work.

The Birkenhead constituency (where BSFC is located) has high levels of deprivation compared with the North-West and England, with 40% of children and young people living in low-income households<sup>4</sup> and 24% being eligible for free school meals as of Autumn 2020/21.

<sup>5</sup>

Within this context, BSFC identified a need to provide additional specialist pastoral support for young people with experience of children's services and created the Progress Mentor (PM) role in 2018. The aim of the PM programme is to provide individualised packages of support by a school-based mentor to help young people with experience of children's services overcome the barriers to success in FE and achieve better education, progression, wellbeing and housing stability outcomes.

### Intervention and Logic Model

**Name:** PM programme

**Why:** The PM role was created when the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at BSFC identified a need to provide additional specialist pastoral support to help young people with experience of children's services. It is intended that the programme provides individualised packages of support by a college-based mentor, with the aim of supporting young people to overcome the barriers to success in FE and achieve better education, progression, wellbeing and housing stability outcomes.

**Who (recipients):** Sixth form college students aged 16-19 who currently have or have had a social worker in the past six years.

**Who (provider):** One full-time equivalent PM based at BSFC, supported by the Deputy DSL and their Director.

**What (materials, procedures):** The PM contacts the student to discuss support inside and outside of college. The brief is to be as innovative as possible, making a practical difference by using technology effectively, maintaining instant communication with Microsoft Teams messaging, and making morning alarm calls where necessary to ensure students are attending college on time every day. If the student is known to the college prior to enrolment, the PM will work with them and their school, social worker, and parent or carer to conduct a needs assessment and build a transition plan. The PM also leads completion of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and attends PEP review meetings.

Once in college, the PM liaises with teachers to communicate relevant information and they meet regularly with the student to build a positive relationship. The frequency of meetings is tailored to students' needs. The PM works closely and coordinates with various staff in the college who can provide different support to the student, including their pastoral tutor, the student Engagement Officer, the Duke of Edinburgh Coordinator, the Designated Mental Health Lead and additional learning support team, the academic skills programme staff, the non-counselling listening service, the bursary team and the careers advisor / careers clinic staff. The PM is also part of the college safeguarding team, attending all meetings and

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<sup>3</sup> See for example: WWCS and CASCADE (University of Cardiff), Care Experienced Young People and Higher Education, May 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Wirral Intelligence Service (2019)

<sup>5</sup> DfE Explore Education Statistics (2021)

reporting on CPOMS where necessary. The PM reports on their cohort monthly to the safeguarding team and has instant access to advice during the week from the DSL and Deputy DSL if needed.

Outside of college, the PM makes contact with external agencies who can help the student and facilitates access to resources such as work experience or contact with universities to discuss fields of interest. If the student is already working with agencies such as children's services, the PM will make contact with the social worker to make sure the PM is invited to all the relevant meetings, so the PM they can advocate for, and support, the student. The PM also has a network of contacts to call on for advice, direct referrals and information, which includes housing, health and Universal Credit. The PM ensures that all stakeholders are kept updated on the student's progress at college and acts as a liaison between the student, their teachers and the external agencies they interact with.

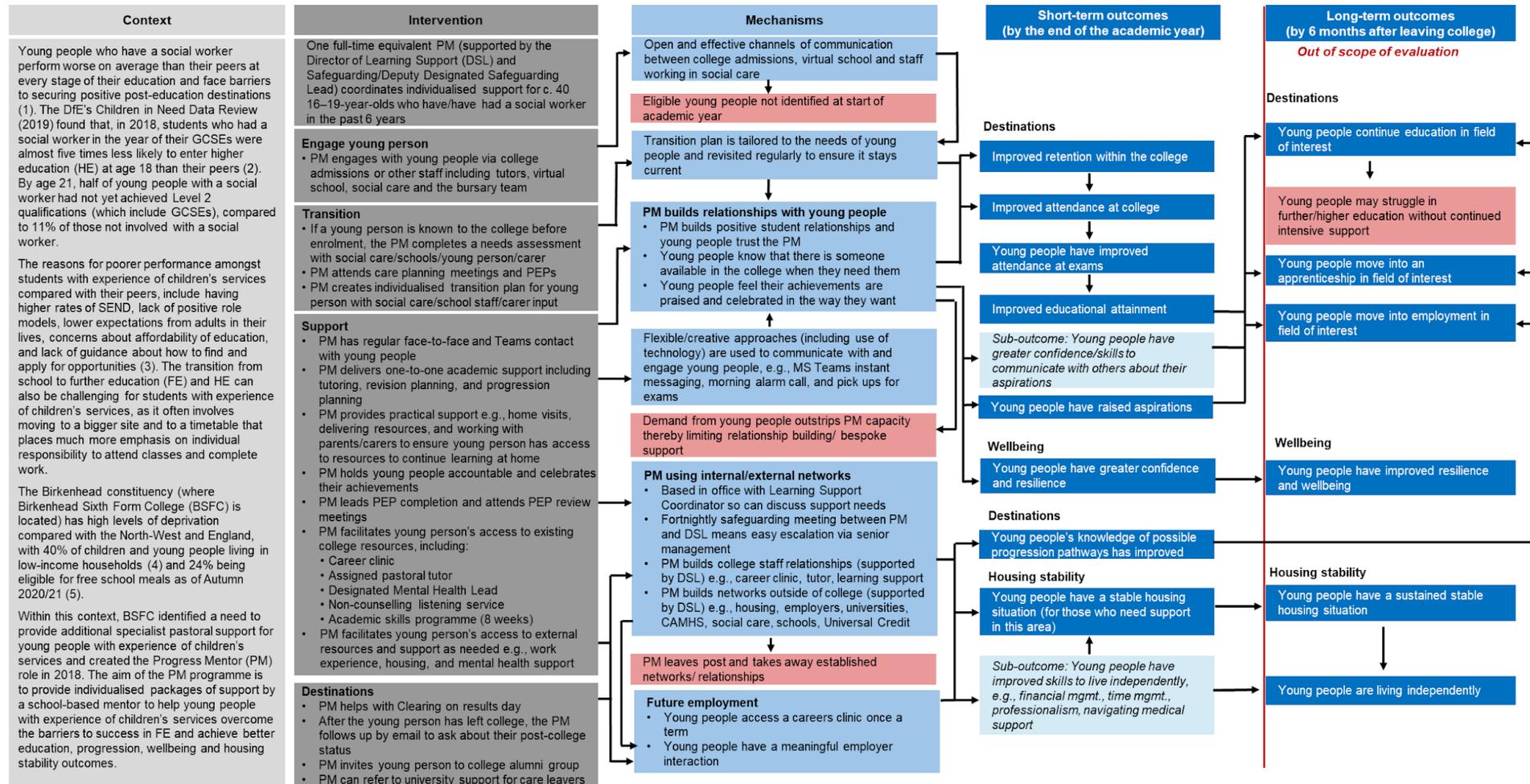
**How (format):** The PM has regular face to face meetings and Microsoft Teams contact with students. The PM also maintains contact with parents and carers, particularly those on child protection (CP) plans, to check on the student's welfare and ensure they have the resources required at home to continue learning outside of college hours. The PM will follow up with students by email after they have left college to ascertain their post-college status and to invite them to join the college alumni group.

**Where (location):** The PM provides support both on the college premises and virtually. The PM is based centrally in the college Learning Assistance Base (LAB) so is available to the students during college hours. Instant messaging on Microsoft Teams facilitates contact outside of core hours. The PM may also attend meetings outside of the college premises if needed, in a support and advocacy role, for example with social workers and other agencies who the student may interact with such as housing.

**When and how much (dosage):** The dosage varies according to the needs and preferences of the students. Some students want or need more frequent meetings with the PM and more regular or more intensive support. For example, 'light' dosage is a meeting between the student and the PM a couple of times per term, whereas a 'high' dosage can involve daily contact at key points, for example if the young person is in need of more intensive support.

**Tailoring (adaptation):** The frequency and intensity of support is tailored to individual student needs. Each young person's support plan is tailored to their needs assessment and personalised plan, which are both regularly revisited.

The Logic Model for the PM programme is provided overleaf. This has been developed based on a review and synthesis of programme design and delivery materials, consultation with WWCS, and interviews with the key college personnel overseeing and delivering the programme and the local authority's Virtual School headteacher. While it includes long-term outcomes, the red line indicates the accountability of this pilot evaluation, in that long-term outcomes are out of scope for the evaluation.



(1) DfE Improving the educational outcomes of Children in Need of help and protection (2018)  
(2) DfE, Help, protection, education: concluding the Children in Need Review (2019).  
(3) See for example: WWCSC and CASCADE (University of Cardiff), Care Experienced Young People and Higher Education, May 2020.  
(4) Wirral Intelligence Service (2019)  
(5) DfE Explore Education Statistics (2021)

## Research questions

The pilot aims to address the following research questions.

1. **Evidence of feasibility:** How is the Progress Mentor programme being delivered in BSFC, and how far is implementation as intended?
2. **Readiness for trial:** What (if any) changes are needed to the design, procedures or delivery approach of the Progress Mentor programme before any wider rollout?
3. **Indicative evidence of impact:** In the short-term, do the destinations, wellbeing, and housing stability of students (who have received support from the Progress Mentor programme) improve?
4. **Costs:** How much does it cost to deliver the Progress Mentor programme per student?

## Planned indicators

The table below sets out the planned indicators which will be used to answer the proposed research questions.

Key questions	Indicators	Method and Stage
How is the Progress Mentor programme being delivered in BSFC, and how far is implementation as intended?	Number of young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged in the programme and broken down by key characteristics / demographics / involvement with children's services</li> <li>Offered Progress Mentor support that take it up</li> <li>Who drop out or disengage with the progress mentor programme and the reasons for this</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College records, needs assessments and PEPs (Phase 1 early implementation and Phase 2 Summative)</li> <li>Progress Mentor progress reviews (Phase 2 summative)</li> <li>Interviews with young people and Progress Mentor (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Support provided / interaction with young people by the Progress Mentor (including volume, regularity and variation by young people etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College records and Progress Mentor progress review analysis (Phase 1 early implementation and Phase 2 Summative)</li> <li>Interviews with young people and Progress Mentor (Phase 1 early implementation and Phase 2 Summative)</li> </ul>
	Perceived challenges / barriers to delivering the Progress Mentor programme as anticipated, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The programme meeting demand from young people</li> <li>Identifying and supporting the target audience</li> <li>Support received by the Progress Mentor to deliver the programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews/focus groups with progress mentor, college delivery leads, wider college staff and external stakeholders (Phase 1 early implementation and Phase 2 Summative)</li> </ul>
	Young person's views and experiences of the Progress Mentor programme including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether or not they engage with the support</li> <li>Whether or not they feel they know who to reach out to for support</li> <li>Whether or not they feel specific support is tailored to their needs but report comparable experiences in terms of overall awareness / access to support if needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with young people (Phase 1 early implementation and Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>

	Parents/carers' views and experiences of the Progress Mentor programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Interviews with parent/carers (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Wider stakeholders' views and experiences of the Progress Mentor programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Interviews/focus groups with Progress Mentor, college delivery team, wider college staff and external stakeholder (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Any negative unintended consequences of the Progress Mentor programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●All Phase 2 summative interviews</li> </ul>
What (if any) changes are needed to the design, procedures or delivery approach of the Progress Mentor programme before any wider rollout?	Clear description of the intervention and the contextual factors that will allow it to be implemented and evaluated are in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Develop Logic Model at start of the evaluation (in the scoping Phase)</li> <li>●Review and revision of Logic Model at end of the evaluation</li> <li>●Triangulation of all data collected and analysed</li> </ul>
	Perceived changes needed to the design, procedures or delivery approach before wider roll-out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Interviews/focus groups with progress mentor, college delivery team and wider college staff (Phase 2 summative)</li> <li>●Review of all the study findings at the end of the data collection stage (August 2022-September 2022)</li> </ul>
In the short-term, do the destinations, wellbeing, and housing stability of students (who have received support from the Progress Mentor programme) improve?	Young person's college status (i.e. have they remained in college or not)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●College records analysis (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Young person's attendance at college (and comparison with peers) and changes in this over time (and reasons for this)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●College records analysis (Phase 1 early implementation for baseline and Phase 2 summative)</li> <li>●Interviews/focus groups with young people, progress mentor, parent/carers and wider college staff (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Proportion of programme young people who sat and missed exams (and comparison to previous years if applicable) and reasons for any change (where applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●College records analysis (Phase 2 summative)</li> <li>●Interviews/focus groups with young people, progress mentor, parent/carers and wider college staff (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Young people's achieved grades for completed courses and whether this differs to predicted grades at the start of the year (and reasons for this)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●College records analysis - compared with similar cohorts in previous years (August 2022) – end of course attainment for those completing courses in July; end of year attainment for those midway through courses</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interviews with young people, Progress Mentor, parent/carers and interviews/focus group with wider college staff (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	<p>Perceptions about whether or not young people have seen changes in their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aspirations</li> <li>● Confidence to secure their chosen post-college destination</li> <li>● Confidence to ask for help</li> <li>● Awareness of progression pathways (e.g. university, apprenticeship, work options) and source of knowledge</li> <li>● Ability to plan and manage their time</li> <li>● Confidence to live independently (e.g. paying bills/rent on time)</li> <li>● Understanding of housing options available to them (where relevant)</li> </ul> <p>Reasons for any changes in the above (where applicable).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interviews with young people (Phase 1 (early implementation) for baseline and Phase 2 (summative))</li> <li>● Interviews/focus groups with progress mentor, parent/carers and wider college staff (Phase 2 summative)</li> <li>● PEP (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	<p>Young people's views on how likely (or not) they would be to communicate with others about their aspirations. Where they are likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Who would they speak to</li> <li>● What would they speak about</li> <li>● How they felt about the conversations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interviews with young people (Phase 1 (early implementation) for baseline and Phase 2 (summative))</li> </ul>
	<p>Perceptions amongst young people of the benefits (if any) of accessing careers advice / clinic / meaningful employer interaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interviews with young people (Phase 1 (early implementation) for baseline and Phase 2 (summative))</li> </ul>
	<p>Proportion of young people involved in the Progress Mentor programme in unstable housing upon entering college and at the end of the academic year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress Mentor progress reviews and safeguarding meeting notes analysis (Phase 1 early implementation)</li> <li>● Interviews with young people, Progress Mentor and external college stakeholders (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>

	Proportion of relevant young people who accessed housing support	
	Variation in achievement of short-term outcomes between young people in different circumstances / with different characteristics and reasons for this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•All Phase 2 summative interviews</li> </ul>
How much does it cost to deliver the Progress Mentor programme per student?	Direct costs and time costs incurred in delivering the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•College financial records on programme spend (Phase 2 summative)</li> <li>•Interviews with staff regarding time and resources spent (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>
	Total cost divided by total number of young people involved in the programme (average cost per student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•As above, plus number of young people who have engaged (Phase 2 summative)</li> </ul>

**Methods**

In summary, pilot data will be captured through:

<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Collection Timeline</b>
Semi-structured interviews with two delivery leads (to include the PM and DSL at BSFC) and a key stakeholder in the referrals stage at the Wirral Council	3 interviews	November 2021
Semi-structured interviews with young people taking part in the PM programme	15 interviews	November/December 2021
Monitoring information (MI) analysis	Approx. 40 PM participants	January 2022
Semi-structured interviews with delivery leads at BSFC (PM, DSL and Vice Principal)	3 interviews	May/June 2022
Semi-structured interviews with young people taking part in the PM programme (follow up interviews from Phase 1 where possible)	10 interviews	Late June/ July 2022
Focus group with college tutors and support staff (e.g. staff from the academic skills programme and support staff such as mental health lead and additional learning support team)	1 focus group of 4-6 participants	June 2022
Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders outside the college who have been contacted by the PM to support young people (e.g. organisations providing housing, mental health and benefits support)	2 interviews	June 2022
Semi-structured interviews with parents or carers of a some of the young people interviewed	6 interviews	July 2022
MI analysis	Approx. 40 PM participants	July/ August 2022

## Sample selection and recruitment

There are a number of key individuals who we will need to interview as part of the pilot evaluation (e.g. the PM, their line manager, the staff member providing academic tutoring support). We will email them asking them to take part in an interview, which will be followed up by reminder email/phone if there is no response.

For wider college staff and stakeholders, we will approach the PM and their manager for suggested contacts drawing on what we know about the key roles that are involved. We do not have access to personal contact details for these individuals, so will be reliant on support from BSFC to make initial contact with them. We will provide an information sheet and email invite to inform stakeholders about the evaluation and the importance of their contribution, while ensuring they are aware of the voluntary nature of taking part. The information sheet will ask stakeholders to get in touch with us with any queries and to book a time for an interview. If stakeholders are willing for their email details to be shared with us (via BSFC), we will be able to contact them directly by email and/or phone if possible, to discuss the evaluation, ascertain their willingness to take part and to schedule interviews.

Students taking part in the PM programme will be purposively sampled to take part in interviews. BSFC will provide the evaluation team with a breakdown of the profile of PM young people by key characteristics (gender, SEND status, ethnicity, current care status, whether in first or second year of the programme, key support needs). We will use this to design a 'target' sample frame reflecting, as far as possible, the range of different students receiving support from the programme. We will ask the PM to send a suitable message to all young people involved with the PM programme telling them about the evaluation. We will then directly contact the target sample of 15 young people via email in the first instance to ask them to take part in an interview. If there is no response we will follow up by phone to ascertain whether they are willing to take part and to schedule an interview. We will need to cooperate with the college and for them to provide young people with an information sheet and consent form to share their contact details with us – email and ideally telephone number as well. We will ask the college to collect the consent forms back from the 15 young people (that we have randomly selected) in person. Taking this approach will mitigate against the risk of a sample biased towards young people with positive experiences of the PM programme.

Interviews will be scheduled at a time convenient for young people (including early evenings or weekends) and will be conducted via Teams/Zoom or phone. A £20 Amazon or similar (e.g. PayPal credit) will be offered as a thank you for taking part in an interview. We are conducting interviews with 15 students during Phase 1 of fieldwork and seeking to re-interview 10 of those at Phase 2. We will ask the young people for permission for follow-up contact at the end of the Phase 1 interview, and for consent to be interviewed again at the start of the Phase 2 interview. In order to ensure the sample is not biased towards non-dropouts, we will review the target sample prior to the start of Phase 2 and include additional young people if required.

## Consent procedures

We will draft a short information sheet that BSFC can distribute to ensure that potential young people are fully informed about the evaluation, how their data will be used, how long it will be retained, and their rights under the GDPR (e.g. to withdraw from the research or to see their data). The information sheet will be accompanied by a consent form about taking

part in the research, which will be completed again at Phase 2 (where the same participants are followed up). Consent is not time-limited, and participants can withdraw their consent to take part at any time.

There is a risk that young people may feel that their treatment by the PM/ BSFC is conditional on their participation in the evaluation. All communications will overtly state that there is no obligation to take part, and that their decision will not affect their ongoing support from the college.

## Data Collection

### Phase 1 (early implementation)

This will be conducted towards the end of the autumn term, between October and December 2021. This Phase will consist of:

- **Semi-structured qualitative interviews with key delivery stakeholders (3 interviews).** This will involve interviewing the PM, the DSL and a representative from the local authority. The purpose of these interviews will be to ascertain how well the programme is up and running, explore how the process of recruitment/onboarding has gone, look at the links that are being made with wider support services and to see if any adjustments have been made to the delivery process (and why). This stage will be particularly crucial given that the PM in post is leaving in October/November 2021 and a replacement has been recruited. We will interview the PM prior to them leaving, and their replacement once they have been in post for a few weeks.
- **Semi-structured qualitative interviews with young people (15 interviews).** The cohort of young people on the PM programme will consist of approximately 40 individuals. We will conduct interviews with 15, to achieve good representation by gender, ethnicity, and other key characteristics. These interviews will form a qualitative baseline against which we intend to make an assessment of distance travelled while being supported by the programme. The interviews will cover young people's prior experience of education and pastoral support received, the nature of their FE study programme, their support needs, their reasons for getting involved with the PM programme and what they are hoping to achieve at the end of the academic year and beyond. It will also cover their early experiences of engaging with the programme. These interviews will be conducted by telephone/video call, and we will give all participants £20 as a thank you for their time.
- **Secondary analysis of programme MI.** At this stage, we will be able to report on the number and profile of young people participating and the proportion of the eligible cohort that this represents. We will also be able to analyse the amount and type of support received in this first term of the programme based on PM records.

The findings from this stage will be summarised in an interim report in March 2022.

### Phase 2 (summative stage)

This will be a more extensive qualitative stage conducted towards the end of the summer term and will enable us to reflect on the full year of programme delivery and what this has achieved. We will conduct the primary research element with staff in May (avoiding the traditionally very busy end-of-year exam period). The interviews with young people and their parents or carers will take place in July when they can reflect on their full years' experience. This final summative stage will involve:

- **Semi-structured qualitative interviews with key delivery stakeholders (3 interviews).** The PM, the DSL, and Vice Principal of the college.
- **Focus group with wider staff in the college.** The aim of these interviews is to understand how the delivery of the programme has integrated with delivery throughout the rest of the college to improve outcomes for young people. We anticipate including 2-3 tutors from the academic skills programme and 2-3 other

support staff such as the mental health lead or additional learning support team. This will be conducted via Zoom/Teams.

- **Semi-structured qualitative interviews with wider stakeholders (2 interviews).** The aim of these interviews will be to speak to individuals outside the college that have been contacted by the PM programme about supporting young people. These will include organisations providing support around housing, mental health or claiming benefits.
- **Semi-structured qualitative interviews with young people (10 interviews).** As far as possible these will be longitudinal interviews with those interviewed at the early implementation stage. This will allow us to compare needs/aspirations at the start of the programme with what young people have achieved at the end of the programme, and how they feel the programme has supported them in this.
- **Semi-structured qualitative interviews with parents/carers (6 interviews).** For some young people who are less confident in articulating their views or may be less able to identify their own progress (particularly on soft skills), their parents or carers may be better placed to provide input on the short-term outcomes of the support provided through the PM programme. We will ask permission at the end of the interview with the young person to also contact their parent/carer (some may not provide permission hence we have allowed for 6 interviews). We will also consider the possibility of including some parents/carers of young people not interviewed, with the help of BSFC, to ensure the sample is not biased against non-dropouts. Again these interviews will take place by video call/phone and an incentive of £20 will be offered. These interviews will cover similar ground to those with young people themselves but will also explore the level of interaction that parents/carers have had with the college and the perceived impact this has had.
- **Final secondary analysis of programme MI.** This will update the work conducted at the early implementation stage. It will provide final summative analysis on the amount and range of support received by participants (i.e. the dosage) and on the outcomes shown. If we are able to access the wider college data for comparison purposes then this analysis will also be included.

## Analysis

We will design an evaluation framework setting out the research questions, outcomes and data sources that will be used to address them. The evaluation framework will be linked to the Logic Model and will form the basis of our analysis plan, which will incorporate MI and qualitative data. All qualitative discussions will be recorded with consent, stored on our secure drive in a folder which only designated team members will have access to.

Our analytical approach for the qualitative research will be iterative and inductive – building upwards from the views of participants – incorporating elements of ‘grounded theory’ analysis e.g. the thematic review and continual analysis of hypothesis from participants’ dialogue and researchers’ impressions of the discussion (e.g. pauses, tone). Analysis will begin informally during fieldwork itself; as our research team work closely together throughout each fieldwork period, feeding back headline findings to each other as discussions are conducted, and continually updating our approach and thinking as we gather data. All interviews are written up in detail, including verbatim quotes, in an analytical framework in Excel. The framework will be structured around the Logic Model and research questions, with a research question per column, and reflections on each qualitative interview entered individually per row. The framework will also include key sample data, to allow for comparison of findings by different characteristics. The data will then be analysed to search

for themes and trends, both present and absent. Once qualitative analysis is complete we will compare those findings with other evidence from the MI analysis to triangulate, challenge and address gaps. Director-led analysis sessions will bring this thinking together, encourage challenge of assumptions and identify areas for further, targeted analysis.

## Indicative evidence of impact analysis

The evaluation will not seek to conduct a formal impact analysis. However, we will explore the feasibility of comparing MI on learner completions and attainment rates among programme participants as of August 2022, with data from the college's previous Individual Learner Records (ILR) returns (on learner completions and attainment rates as of August 2018, August 2019, and August 2020) to provide a degree of contextual comparison data (e.g. on outcomes for historical cohorts of similar young people who have had a Social Worker within the last 6 years). This will generate indicative evidence only, especially as the participant cohort size (n=40) is likely to be too small to pick up significant differences and groups might not be entirely comparable/similar.

## Cost Evaluation

We will conduct analysis to establish the costs of delivery of the programme. This data will take account of delivery staff time and salaries as well as any direct costs involved in delivering the programme (for example, the cost of any additional materials/support provided to participants as part of the programme). We will collect this information during interviews with key delivery staff using a basic costs template which we will share with them in advance. Where necessary we will obtain further clarification through telephone / e-mail discussions. The aim of this part of the evaluation is to provide an estimate of cost per participant, and analysis of variation in cost per participant based on profile characteristics. It is outside the scope of the evaluation to conduct any more detailed costing evaluation such as Cost Benefit Analysis.

## Ethics

All our research is conducted in accordance with the five principles of research ethics, as set out by the Government Social Research (GSR) unit and the Social Research Association's Ethical Guidelines. We also comply with the Joint Code of Practice for Research, and the guidelines provided by the Market Research Association, UK Evaluation Society and the National Children's Bureau. All team members interviewing young people will have an up-to-date DBS check. Ethical approval is being sought from the WWCS Ethics Panel. The table below sets out key ethical considerations and their mitigations.

All information sheets will stress the voluntary nature of participation. Information sheets and consent forms will make it clear that participation is entirely voluntary and will not affect the education or support they receive from the college. Verbal consent to participation and to recording of the interview will be collected before the interview begins and participants will be informed that they can choose to withdraw their consent at any time.

Ethical Consideration	Mitigation
<p>There is only one PM therefore the PM may perceive the evaluation to be about their own job performance rather than an evaluation of the programme as a whole, leading to anxiety/ impacting on their performance in the role. This consideration is heightened because the PM in post for the past 2 years is leaving at the end of September 2021 and will be replaced by a new recruit.</p>	<p>All communications about the evaluation (e.g. information sheet, introductory emails, etc) should focus on the design and operation of the programme and make it explicitly clear that the evaluation is not about the performance of the individual PM. Reassurance should be reiterated at each fieldwork points. Reporting should focus on programme design and implementation, including systemic barriers and challenges, not on the individual performance of the PM. The language used in the report will not be personalised and will focus more generally on aspects of performance / behaviour that were considered helpful / unhelpful.</p>
<p>Young people may feel 'under pressure' to take part in the evaluation or that they cannot be fully open and honest due to the relatively small volume of participants in the programme.</p>	<p>Information sheets and consent forms will make it clear that taking part is voluntary and the students' relationship with the college will not be affected if they decline to participate. Ideally the sample provision and recruitment should be set up so that we handle this, and the college does not know which individual students have taken part (unless the student chooses to relay this information to the college themselves).</p>
<p>Loss of sensitive MI data e.g. on care status, needs assessment, SEND</p>	<p>MI data will be transferred securely using our secure FileX data transfer system and will not contain any names or contact details.</p>
<p>Interviews may raise sensitive issues for young people e.g. around support with mental health or anxiety, creating a risk of distress to participants.</p>	<p>The information sheet and other advance materials will provide a summary of what the interview covers so that young people know what to expect. The interview will not focus on the young person's history / reasons for coming into contact with the care system but will focus on their experience of the PM programme and its impacts. Only experienced researchers with skills interviewing vulnerable respondents will be conducting the interviews and will make it clear to young people they don't have to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable about. Interviewers will pause/ stop the interview if the young person shows any sign of distress and will raise any concerns with the PM if there is a perceived risk of harm or self-harm to the young person.</p>

Safeguarding issues emerge during an interview with a young person.

The consent form will include clear information about the disclosure procedure if any safeguarding concerns arise during the interview. This will be reiterated at the start of the interview. We will also prepare an internal safeguarding document for interviewers to ensure the full team is fully briefed and has clarity about the procedures they should follow if safeguarding issues arise.

## Data Protection

IFF, as data controller, is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office for Data Protection under registration number Z5571698. IFF is accredited with ISO27001, the international standard for information security. We are fully compliant with GDPR and GDPR training is given to all staff members. All our storage, handling and processing of personal and sensitive data is conducted within the UK, and in line with ISO27001. All personal data is stored on our secure drive, which only the project team has access to. IFF is also certified under the CyberEssentials scheme.

IFF will agree access to MI from BSFC in order to conduct analysis on the profile of programme participants (for example, demographic profile) including special category data (ethnicity, health) and basic information about patterns of engagement with the programme (e.g. frequency of meetings with the PM / 'dosage'), and outcomes (e.g. learner attendance, course completion, attainment, progression). We do not require personal identifiers such as names and contact details to be appended to the MI.

However, we will need to request participant names and contact details in order to invite a sample of students to take part in the qualitative depth interviews. We will establish a consent process and data sharing agreement with BSFC to enable this. Participants will be provided with a concise, clearly worded information sheet and consent form tailored to the evaluation.

We explain to research participants, at the point of interviewing them, their rights to see the personal identifiable data we hold on them, to change this data, or to have it deleted, whilst their personal data is held. Under GDPR, participants can have their personal data deleted at any point in time, whilst it is held. At the point of interviewing, we will also signpost them to an FAQs page on our website giving research participants more information about the legal basis for taking part, what we do with their data, and the rights that they have. See here: <https://www.iffresearch.com/gdpr/>

All personal data will be securely deleted no later than six months after the end of the project.

Under [General Data Protection Regulation, Chapter 2, Article 6](#), IFF will be collecting qualitative data from programme participants and stakeholders on the basis of informed consent. MI used for the secondary analysis will be accessed on the basis of public task and will not contain any individual names or contact details.

## Personnel

What Works for Children's Social Care is funding the pilot of the PM programme, as well as the evaluation.

IFF Research have been commissioned to conduct the pilot evaluation. The IFF team comprises:

**Claire Johnson, Director**, will be the Principal Investigator with overall responsibility for:

- Overall responsibility for quality delivery to timetable
- Lead research design

- Conduct some interviews
- Lead analysis session
- Lead report author

**Kelsey Beninger** is the second Director playing a key role in the initial design of the study and consultancy input thereafter. She will also stand in for Claire during any periods of absence, if needed, and support on quality assurance where needed, for example by internally reviewing the report.

Libby Eastwood, Associate Director and lead Project Manager. Key aspects of her role are as follows:

- Overall project manager
- Day-to-day point of contact for WWCS and BSFC
- Ensure data protection and ethical procedures are followed across the team
- Design of topic guides and lead analysis
- Conduct interviews
- Participate in analysis and reporting

Sophie Elliott, Senior Research Manager. Key aspects of her role are as follows:

- Project management support and cover for Libby if needed due to absence
- Input into topic guide design
- Lead on costing work and analysis
- Oversee qualitative recruitment
- Conduct interviews
- Participate in analysis and reporting

Joe Charsley, Senior Research Executive. Key aspects of Joe's role on the project are:

- Lead on MI analysis
- Conduct interviews
- Input into analysis and reporting

## Risks

This section outlines the anticipated risks that may arise and steps that will be taken to mitigate against these.

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Sensitive topics covered in the interviews may give rise to distress due to the nature of questions (e.g. exploring what support young people have had through the PM programme and whether and how this has helped them or not).</p>	<p>Young people will receive an information sheet including an overview of the research coverage and will be asked to provide informed consent prior to the interview starting. They will be advised they can stop the interview at any time or move on from a question they would prefer not to answer. All researchers conducting the interviews are experienced in conducting research among vulnerable groups.</p>
<p>The programme's delivery may be impacted by delayed recruitment and the change of PM, especially among young people who are in their second year of college/ second year of the programme (who have an established relationship with the previous PM).</p>	<p>Part of the mitigation for this lies with BSFC in terms of recruitment and induction for the new PM, support provided within the college etc during the transition period between individual PMs. From the evaluation perspective, it will be important to discuss this with the new PM, the DSL, young people, parents/carers, wider college staff and external stakeholders to identify any issues which they feel are related to the change of PM so that this can be factored into the interpretation of findings. At the same time, this should be approached and analysed objectively i.e. in relation to the change of PM per se and not related to performance of the new individual doing the job. The two-phase design of the evaluation should also help to mitigate this as fieldwork takes place at two points, which will effectively be 1-2 months into the job, and again 8-9 months into the job.</p>
<p>Low response to qualitative interviews</p>	<p>Young people, parents, college staff and external stakeholders will be provided with information sheets about the evaluation highlighting the importance of taking part and will be offered a range of options to participate (e.g. Teams/Zoom/phone) with IFF being as flexible as possible about the timing of the interviews, including early morning/evenings if required. Young people and parents/carers will be given a financial incentive of £20 Amazon voucher or PayPal credit as a thank you for their time.</p>
<p>Limited or inconsistent MI about the programme</p>	<p>We will talk to the MI lead and the PM early in the project to establish what MI is recorded for the programme, how frequently, and whether any processes in place regarding data quality/ missing data etc. We will advise BSFC if we think there are any key gaps in the programme MI which would be important to address for the</p>

	<p>purposes of the evaluation. Broader college MI on learning outcomes and other related variables such as learning support needs is collated to a standardised format for the Individualised Learner Record so this data should be relatively consistent and good quality.</p>
<p>There remains considerable uncertainty about how the Covid-19 pandemic will play out over the delivery period, for example if BSFC enters lockdown.</p>	<p>We are conducting fieldwork using Teams/Zoom/phone so this will not impact on the interview mode. If the PM programme is placed on hold due to Covid lockdown we may need to pause the evaluation and review timings (depending on how long the programme is on hold for). It will also be important to factor in the impact of any temporary lockdown/ hiatus in young people's access to support, as part of the interviews.</p>

### Timeline

Phase	Timing	Lead
Refine evaluation design, Logic Model, etc	July – Sept 2021	IFF
Protocol and ethics application submitted and approved	Sept 2021	IFF
Design Phase 1 topic guides	Oct 2021	IFF
Phase 1 fieldwork (staff and young people)	Nov – Dec 2021	IFF
Phase 1 MI analysis	Dec 2021 – Jan 2022	IFF
Interim reporting	Mar 2022	IFF
Design Phase 2 topic guides	Apr 2022	IFF
Phase 2 fieldwork (staff and stakeholders)	May – Jun 2022	IFF
Phase 2 fieldwork (young people and parents/carers)	Jun – Jul 2022	IFF
Phase 2 MI analysis	Jul – Aug 2022	IFF
Pilot report	Sept 2022	IFF