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An Evaluation of Futures Together

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Executive Summary

Futures Together is a mentoring project delivered by TimeBank. Muslim women, aged 18-35, volunteer to provide one-to-one support to older Muslim women to help them improve their English language and computer skills.

The project aims to:

- Empower Muslim women by equipping them with the practical skills and confidence to take active roles within their local communities.
- Provide older Muslim women with the skills needed to be able to engage with the younger generation and wider society. This contributes to a stronger, more diverse and inclusive community.
- Equip Muslim women with the practical tools needed to play a full and active role and lead on challenging extremism within their families and communities.

The anticipated outcomes of the project are:

- 70 older Muslim women will have increased their skills and confidence with regard to their English language and digital literacy.
- 70 younger Muslim women will have improved their confidence and leadership skills.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their understanding of and engagement with the issues facing young Muslims in British society.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their active participation in their communities and in utilising services with 10% taking up leading roles in community groups.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their internet usage by 100%.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their knowledge of violent extremist issues enabling them to better challenge such ideologies and identify and support vulnerable young people who may be at risk.
- Local intergenerational contacts in London will have been improved and a new network established.

This report is an evaluation of the project conducted by an independent evaluator. It aims to assess the impact of the project, evaluate the impact of mentoring and assess the contribution the project has made to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) DCLG agendas of digital inclusion, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism.

Project Outcomes

The project has achieved the following outcomes for mentees:

English language: participants felt the project improved the mentees' English language skills and confidence. 5 out of 8 mentees interviewed felt that their language skills had improved and 76% of those that completed the evaluation form said they felt more confident in their English language as a result of the project. Having access to a mentor who was fluent in English and had time to dedicate to them boosted their confidence in speaking English significantly. However, the short time frame of the project meant that participants felt that their progress was limited and that they would have benefited from spending more time with their mentor.

Computer literacy: mentees said that the project helped to improve their skills using a computer and the internet. 6 out of 10 mentees interviewed said their computer skills had improved and 94% of those that completed the evaluation form said they felt more confident

using a computer as a result of taking part in the project. They learned basic skills; how to search for information on the internet, access online services and utilise online communication channels. This helped them feel more connected to friends and family and impacted positively on their confidence. It was apparent that a lack of confidence, rather than lack of access, had been the main barrier preventing the older women from using computers in the first place. However, whilst clear progress was made, many mentees were still too nervous to use the computer or access the internet by themselves. They also found it hard to retain the skills and information that their mentors had taught them. In this way the project served as an excellent introduction to computers and the internet for the older women, but they require further continuation support to ensure skills and confidence are retained.

Confidence: the confidence of mentees was significantly improved in the area of computers and English language. Taking part in the project also made them feel more confident in their wider ability to learn and 6 out of the 8 mentees interviewed expressed an intention to take part in future learning activities as a direct result of taking part in Futures Together.

Intergenerational relationships: the project was successful in promoting positive relationships between individuals of different generations and improving contact between older and younger Muslim women. It is notable that the older women did not see age as a major barrier between them and the younger generation and already had positive perceptions of younger people.

Community participation: the project did not make a significant impact in encouraging the older women to participate more fully in their community. Most were already happy with their level of involvement in their community and had signed up to the project because they wanted to develop on a personal level.

The project had the following outcomes for mentors:

Confidence: all the younger women gained confidence from their experience of volunteering as mentors. This confidence developed from the satisfaction of knowing that they were helping another person, from realising that they could interact successfully with women who were considerably older than them and from the new skills they developed. Many had started to apply this increased confidence to other areas of their personal and professional lives. This application illustrates the benefit of the confidence that they gained from taking part in the project and reveals how this impacts on other areas of their lives.

Leadership: volunteering as mentors gave the young women the opportunity to develop leadership skills and 95 % of those who completed the evaluation forms said that taking part in the project helped them to improve their leadership skills. In particular they felt their communication skills had improved along with their ability to think on their feet and make decisions.

Intergenerational relationships: the age difference was more of an issue for the younger women as some were nervous about leading the mentoring especially as they were mentoring an older woman. From the outset they held loose stereotypes about how the older women would be and the sorts of interests they would have. The contact they had with the older women successfully dispelled these stereotypes.

Community participation: taking part in Futures Together increased the motivation of the younger women to take part in further community activities and volunteering opportunities. 78% of mentors who completed the evaluation forms said that they had been inspired by their experience of mentoring to volunteer again in the future. A number of the mentors interviewed had already started to participate in other community activities as a direct result of their experience of mentoring.

In addition to the outcomes specific to the participants, the project achieved wider benefits:

The value of mentoring: the one to one element of the mentoring relationship was identified by participants as being its most valuable characteristic. The one to one approach is an extremely effective method for supporting older women to improve their English language skills, computer skills and confidence. Not only does it enable support to be tailored specifically to their needs but it provides a safe learning space where they feel comfortable asking questions and making mistakes.

Community cohesion: the mentoring relationships formed in Futures Together encourage positive and meaningful interaction between people of different backgrounds (young and old) and therefore contribute directly to community cohesion.

Preventing violent extremism: there is no evidence to suggest that Futures Together directly increases participants' knowledge of violent extremist issues, thus enabling them to better challenge such ideologies and identify and support vulnerable young people who may be at risk. However, the project does support community cohesion and there are arguments that suggest cohesive communities are more resilient to violent extremism and better able to take preventative action against it.

An unintended outcome: the project brought together women from different national and cultural backgrounds. A widely accepted indicator of community cohesion is the number of strong and meaningful relationships created between people of different backgrounds therefore encouraging communication and understanding between groups that wouldn't normally mix and further contributed to community cohesion.

Recommendations

- The short timeframe of the mentoring relationship made it difficult for mentors and mentees to achieve as much as they wanted. In particular mentees found it difficult to retain what they had been taught by their mentor and therefore it is questionable whether the skills they developed were sustained in the longer term. It is recommended that the length of the mentoring relationship be increased in order to allow participants more time to cover all the areas they want and to consolidate their learning.
- Low language and literacy levels, in addition to low levels of confidence, in some mentees made it difficult for them to make the progress they would have liked in their language and computer skills. It is recommended that the language levels of mentees are assessed by TimeBank prior to matching them and that enrolment criteria be developed. This would ensure that all mentees are of a minimum standard required to benefit from the project.
- Some mentors did not feel adequately equipped to support their mentee and would have liked more resources to help them. In particular resources such as flash cards, textbooks and worksheets were suggested by mentors. It is recommended that improvements are made to the mentor training and resources to enable them to better support mentees. Increasing the length of the training for mentors in the area of supporting individuals with low English language skills would help mentors feel more confident leading the relationship.
- Some mentors wanted to continue to volunteer on the project once they had completed their 12 hours of mentoring and felt that the skills they had developed as a

result of their mentoring experience would benefit the project. It is recommended that TimeBank create opportunities for mentor engagement once the mentoring relationship has ended, for example mentoring another individual or talking about their experiences to new mentors. Considering the time and resource already invested in training and support by TimeBank it would make sense to continue to work with them in order to benefit from the project.

- The one to one approach of mentoring is an extremely effective method for supporting older women to improve their English language skills, computer skills and confidence. It means that learning can be tailored to the needs of the individual and provides a safe learning environment particularly for individuals that have previously had negative experiences of formal learning environments. It is recommended that TimeBank continues to incorporate one to one mentoring support into their projects.

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1. Introduction

Futures Together is a mentoring project where Muslim women, aged 18-35, volunteer to provide one-to-one support to older Muslim women to help them improve their English language and computer skills.

The project aims to:

- Empower Muslim women by equipping them with the practical skills and confidence to take active roles within their local communities.
- Provide older Muslim women with the skills needed to be able to engage with the younger generation and wider society. This contributes to a stronger, more diverse and inclusive community.
- Equip Muslim women with the practical tools needed to play a full and active role and lead on challenging extremism within their families and communities.

Anticipated Project Outcomes:

- 70 older Muslim women will have increased their skills and confidence with regard to their English language and digital literacy.
- 70 younger Muslim women will have improved their confidence and leadership skills.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their understanding of and engagement with the issues facing young Muslims in British society.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their active participation in their communities and in utilising services with 10% taking up leading roles in community groups.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their internet usage by 100%.
- 140 Muslim women will have increased their knowledge of violent extremist issues enabling them to better challenge such ideologies and identify and support vulnerable young people who may be at risk.
- Local intergenerational contacts in London will have been improved and a new network established.

After full training and with continuous support, mentors spend a minimum of 12 hours with their mentees over a period of 6 -12 weeks. The mentoring takes place at the Al Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre in Kensington and Chelsea where the mentees are recruited. TimeBank have also more recently established the project in East London, in partnership with the Limehouse Project, however this evaluation only considers those relationships that have taken place at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre.

Established in April 2009, Futures Together is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) through their 'Preventing Violent Extremism: Community Leadership Fund'. This funding lasts until March 2011. Futures Together received additional funding in January 2010 from Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales to enable the delivery of best practice workshops across the UK and the development of a computer skills toolkit which will be distributed to community centres and mosques across the UK. This funding continues until December 2011.

This report is an independent evaluation of Futures Together. The evaluation has three main aims:

1. To assess the impact of the project on the participants
2. To assess the value of volunteering/mentoring
3. To assess the contribution that the project has made to the following DCLG agendas:
 - Digital inclusion
 - Community cohesion

- Prevention of violent extremism

1.1. Methodology

Interviews were conducted with 18 individuals (8 mentees and 10 mentors) and an exploratory workshop was held with an additional 3 mentors.¹ In addition interviews were conducted with the TimeBank Project Coordinator and the Over 55's Wellbeing Coordinator from TimeBank's partner organisation, Al Mannar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre. Data from 17 mentee evaluation forms and 18 mentor evaluation forms was analysed.² The response rate from completed mentees was 73% and the response rate from completed mentors was 78%. In addition, time was dedicated to a literature review exploring issues of community cohesion, digital inclusion, the value of volunteering and the preventing extremism agenda.

2. Project Background

Futures Together built on the learning from two other TimeBank projects. The Futures project aimed to support black and ethnic minority communities into volunteering opportunities suited to their skills and needs, and the Digitall project used young volunteers as mentors to support older people to use computers and the internet. Due to the success of Digitall and interest shown in Futures by young Muslim women TimeBank developed Futures Together. In addition TimeBank recognised and responded to three key government policy themes: digital inclusion, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism.³

2.1. Digital Inclusion

Evidence suggests that the digital divide is deepening and as more services are delivered online, those who are excluded are in danger of being left further behind. Of those who do not have access to the internet at all, nearly half are aged over 65yrs and 63% of these are women. A tenth of adults feel that their lack of IT skills 'greatly restrict' what they can do personally and professionally.⁴

Age is an important factor with older people rating their skills much lower than younger generations. Older ethnic minority women are a particularly hard to reach group, often not encouraged to leave home, socially isolated and contending with language and cultural barriers.⁵ The report referenced recommends that projects are developed that target this group and support their digital inclusion. There are generally agreed to be three main barriers to digital inclusion– access, motivation and, skills and confidence. Futures Together was designed to develop skills and confidence and improve motivation and therefore giving them more access to services.

2.2. Community Cohesion

Community cohesion has been at the top of government agenda for the last ten years and the sense of urgency in this policy area intensified post 7/7. Whilst the community cohesion agenda was initially (and is arguably still) predominantly concerned with ethnicity and religion as the key form of 'difference' the definitions have been widened to acknowledge that communities can be divided by multifaceted differences such as age and social class, in

¹ The original targets for interviews were 10 mentors and 10 mentees however only 8 mentees agreed to take part. All mentors and mentees who had completed their mentoring relationships were contacted about participating in the evaluation and those who were willing to take part were interviewed. It was difficult to recruit mentors for the exploratory workshop as once they had completed their volunteering they had other commitments.

² At the time of writing the report a total of 31 matches had been made. 4 of these pairs dropped out prior to the completion of their relationship, 19 relationships had completed and 8 were ongoing.

³ It should be noted that Futures Together was developed in 2008 and therefore the design of the project was linked to the policy agendas of the last government.

⁴ Freshminds and DCLG, Understanding digital inclusion – a research report, October 2008, p.36

⁵ DCLG, Community Perspectives on digital inclusion: qualitative research to support the development of a digital inclusion strategy – research report, October 2008, p.47

addition to religion and ethnicity (DCLG 2009). In this sense it is relevant to the intergenerational element of Futures Together.

Government commitment to community cohesion is outlined in the Public Service Agreement (PSA) 21 which is concerned with building more cohesive, empowered and active communities. The PSA 21 outlines 6 indicators of community cohesion. Indicators 2 (the % of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds) and 5 (a thriving third sector, efforts to promote volunteering and social enterprise etc) are both elements that this project addresses.⁶ Indeed most writing on community cohesion emphasises the importance of facilitating meaningful relationships between individuals and this is drawn from 'contact theory' which suggests that the more contact individuals have with one another the more they understand one another. As a result stereotyping and discrimination is reduced. As a research study for DCLG and the Committee for Integration and Cohesion points out:

*'projects that facilitate meaningful interaction between people are seen as important. They are found to be effective in promoting trust, awareness of commonality and positive relationships among participants, and to some extent this impacts positively on the wider community.'*⁷

Futures Together was designed to enable positive relationships to develop between women of different ages and to empower women to take a more active role in their local communities, both of which can be seen to contribute directly to community cohesion.

2.3. Preventing violent extremism

Post 7/7 massive emphasis and resource have been directed towards preventing violent extremism. Government reports suggested that women had a particularly vital role to play in challenging violent extremism in their communities but that their voices often go unheard and that some don't have the confidence or skills to speak up. In a report published by DCLG in 2008 it was stated that:

*'Muslim women have a key role to play in challenging prejudice and stereotypes both within their own communities and in wider society. They possess a largely untapped potential to challenge attitudes that can foster violent extremist ideas.'*⁸

A key aim of Futures Together is to tap into this perceived potential within Muslim women and equip them with the skills, particularly in the area of computer skills, and confidence to play a more active role in opposing violent extremism.

3. Project Outcomes

3.1. Beneficiary Outcomes

3.1.1. English language

Project Aim:

Mentees will have increased their skills and confidence with regard to their English language.

Project Performance:

⁶ Public Service Agreement 21, October 2007

⁷ CLG and Committee for Integration and Cohesion, *What works well in community cohesion*, June 2007

⁸ DCLG, *Preventing violent extremism – next steps for communities*, July 2008

- 5 out of 8 mentees interviewed felt that their language skills had improved. 76% of mentees who completed the evaluation forms felt that their confidence in their English language had increased.⁹
- 9 out of 10 mentors interviewed felt that they had been able to help their mentee to improve their English language skills. For the 1 mentor that did not feel she had helped, this was because her mentee's English was of a good standard already.
- 8 out of 10 mentors interviewed, and 61% of those that completed evaluation forms, felt that they had helped their mentee to improve their confidence in their English language abilities.

Successes:

Participants felt that Futures Together has improved the English language skills and confidence of mentees to some extent.¹⁰ Speaking, reading and listening were the main areas of focus with writing considered significantly harder to teach due to the time constraints of the relationship.

Where the project made a key difference was in terms of the mentees' confidence. Just having the opportunity to speak to and gain feedback from someone fluent in English helped. As one mentor explains:

'I do think the fact that I was seeing her weekly for two hours really built her confidence. I noticed in terms of language and in her speaking, it was a lot faster and more confident and clear when she spoke to me. It had quite a significant impact on her.'

This quote shows that as the mentee's confidence increased so did her ability to communicate more effectively with her mentor. However, whilst this quote demonstrates that the mentee grew in confidence communicating to her mentor, it is not clear whether this translated to other everyday situations. More research is needed to establish whether this is the case.

For others it was clear that this confidence impacted on other areas of their lives too. As the mentor below notes, the confidence gained through mentoring motivated her mentee to return to more formal education and continue improving her English language:

'I think that even just speaking to someone else with a better standard of English gives them more confidence – we went over questions and she asked me queries and she was more confident as a result. She went 10 yrs ago to English classes and now she is going again as she has the confidence she has built from mentoring. She told me last week she had signed up to a course.'

In some pairs, particularly when the mentees' language skills were more developed, the dual aim of improving both computer skills and language skills were complementary. In these cases working on a computer and accessing the internet exposed them to new words and new opportunities to practice their language. As one mentee explains:

'My English improved by using the computer. We focused on writing most of all. My writing has improved and I feel more confident.'

Challenges:

⁹ 73% of mentees who completed their mentoring relationship completed an evaluation form.

¹⁰ A baseline assessment of mentees language levels was not measured before they started to engage in the project therefore this assessment of progress is based on the self-reporting of participants.

For some mentees their language was so limited that they were unable to progress to the computer skills element of the project. 2 of the 8 mentees interviewed chose not to work on the computer due to the time constraints of the mentoring and the desire to focus solely on their English language skills.

The short duration of the mentoring was something that was commented on by both mentees and mentors in the interviews and evaluation forms. 6 out of 8 mentees interviewed and 76% of mentees who completed the evaluation forms said that they wanted more time with their mentor. There was the sense that more could have been achieved had they been able to spend more time together. This is not to say that the project did not achieve its aims but that participants wanted to do more together. As one mentee explains;

'What I wanted was to speak and write proper English and at least I can read a little bit. And speaking is ok sometimes I can speak a little bit. Dahlia [Futures Together Project Coordinator] helped me to get someone to teach me. Six weeks for two hours was not long enough to pick anything up. It helped me a little bit as I didn't know how to write something like 'mother' and now I can and I can read a little bit.'

Mentors were also conscious of the limitations of the time with 50% of those who completed the evaluation forms saying they wanted to spend more time with their mentee. Nearly all mentors that were interviewed expressed a willingness to commit more time to the project and their mentee. It should, however, be noted that this is a resource issue and that more funding would be needed for the project to ensure that pairs were supported adequately for a longer amount of time together.

Most pairs tended to focus more heavily on either one or other of the aims of the project – English language skills or computer skills – in view of the time constraints of the project. This raises the question of whether the project was over ambitious in its dual purpose of supporting English language and computer literacy.

The three mentors at the workshop commented that they had felt ill equipped to support the English language learning needs of their mentees. They would have liked more resources and more guidance in this area. Two mentors in the evaluation forms commented on this also.

One mentor at the workshop pointed out that,

'You can't teach computer literacy if they're not literate in English.'

and another that their mentee was also illiterate in her language of origin. Whilst these difficulties were not representative of all the mentors it does raise questions about whether mentees enrolling in the program should be required to demonstrate a certain level of basic literacy in order to take part in the project. It is hard for a mentor who is not specialist in English language teaching to be effective in supporting a mentee who is illiterate.

3.1.2. Computer literacy

Project Aim:

Mentees will have increased their skills and confidence with regard to digital literacy. Mentors and mentees will increase their Internet usage.

Project Performance:

- 6 out of 8 mentees interviewed said that mentoring support helped them to improve their computer and internet skills.
- 94 % of mentees who completed the evaluation form felt that mentoring support had helped them to feel more confident using a computer.
- 9 out of 10 mentors interviewed stated that they felt they had been able to help their mentee improve their computer skills.
- 83% of mentors that completed the evaluation form felt that mentoring support had helped their mentee to feel more confident using a computer.
- Mentoring support did not significantly increase the mentees' use of the Internet with only 3 out of the 8 interviewed stating that they used the Internet more now.
- Mentoring support did not increase mentors' use of the Internet as they were already prolific users.

Successes:

More progress was made here than in the area of English language. For at least one of the mentees interviewed the experience was transformative and she commented

'I am now another person on the computer. I am so happy. I am different.'

Mentors supported mentees to use the computer and Internet in three main areas:

- Communication – setting up email accounts, utilising online chat facilities to communicate with friends and family abroad.
- Information – finding practical information such as travel news, weather forecast and religious resources.
- Online services – online shopping, paying bills, booking plane tickets etc.

One mentee explains in her evaluation form about the practical things that she is now able to do on the computer:

'With the computer I can now search on Google for TFL, book tickets and access the BBC for news and weather.'

Another mentee in her evaluation form explains the communication channels that the computer has opened up for her:

'I like to do everything myself now I know. We talk to our family in Egypt over email or chat, my daughter always do it before.'

The Wellbeing Coordinator for the over 55s at the Al Mannar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre echoes this and emphasises how using a computer and accessing the internet reduces the social isolation of the older women and has a positive effect on their relationships with their children:

'It is a very good thing because the over 55 group get a lot of information, make friends, send messages using the computer and the internet and they reduce their isolation. It helps them to be proud in front of their children as they know how to operate the computer and feel closer to their children.'

It is apparent that many mentees had access to computers at home prior to participating in mentoring but had not used them mainly through lack of confidence or because children and

grandchildren monopolised them. Mentors noted that their mentees had often heard of the benefits of using computers and the Internet but were too scared to try it out:

'I asked her what she wanted to do and it was the fact that she was scared of using computers as it was unfamiliar so it was getting past this. You know what it's like you think something new is more scary than it is until you do it. We started with basics like typing, so I had to explain what was a space bar and what certain keys were for. She had a computer at home but was scared to use it and it was kind of for her kids. She was scared that if she used it the computer might go wrong or blow up or something... I felt it was more of a confidence thing with her, that she needed that person there next to her in case something went wrong.'

Lack of confidence is a key barrier to computer literacy for the older women and just the simple fact of having someone who was confident and computer literate sitting beside them made a big difference.

Challenges:

Similarly to the English language learning, mentees pointed out that they did not progress as much as they would have liked because of the limited time available. In addition, many mentees struggled to retain information they had learned between sessions which made progress slow. For some this was made worse by the fact that they did not have a computer at home to practice on.

Although most mentees indicated that their confidence with computers had improved, the majority were still too nervous to use their home computer on their own and only 3 of the 8 interviewed said that they used the Internet more as a result of the mentoring support. This prompts the question of whether mentees were able to develop sustainable skills through the mentoring support. Mentors at the workshop also questioned the impact that they made in the long term:

"You just realise that the mentees need some kind of continuation, my mentee has said what happens next after the 12 hours?"

A mentor in an interview echoes this but does also note that the experience of mentoring has made the mentee more open to accessing other learning opportunities:

'I don't think she learnt much because it was hard for her to remember between sessions and find the time to practice, perhaps just the basics really. However, she built up the confidence to go on the computer and take classes.'

In a sense the mentoring sessions acted as an introduction to computer and Internet skills, showing mentees the opportunities available to them online and thereby improving their motivation to use the technology. Having a mentor who was computer literate helped mentees to see and understand the benefits of using computers more clearly and gave them the basic skills needed to navigate a computer. This however does not equate to a sustainable level of ability and mentees clearly needed and wanted more dedicated time with their mentor to make this a reality or continuation via another learning method such as attending classes. As one mentee stated in her evaluation form:

'I have achieved the basics, like surfing the Internet and typing word documents, emails etc but would like to be more confident using the Internet by myself more because I find leaving feedback and interacting with some websites a bit difficult.'

3.1.3. Confidence: Mentors

Project Aim:

Mentors will have improved their confidence.

Project Performance:

- 100% of mentors who were interviewed said that taking part in Futures Together had a positive effect on their confidence.
- 72% of mentors who completed the evaluation forms said that taking part in Futures Together helped to improve their confidence 'a lot' and 28% said that it helped to improve their confidence 'a little'.

Successes:

Improving the confidence of mentors is an area where the project has achieved significantly. As one mentor who was interviewed noted:

'It made me feel I could get on with other people from different backgrounds and the fact I can help people was a boost. I had always wanted to do it and give it a shot but worried I would be really bad at it or something. This is the first time I have done volunteering and I now have the confidence to do it again.'

In this example the positive experience of Futures Together made the mentor realise that she could interact successfully with individuals from different backgrounds which gave her the confidence to take part in other volunteering opportunities.

This was echoed by mentors in the evaluation forms and the improved confidence was particularly related to interacting with individuals from a different age group:

'It has allowed me to be more confident in approaching older Muslim people and offering to help them; it has also allowed me to see things from their perspective.'

Mentors drew confidence from three things:

1. Realising that they had the ability to help someone else, this was an empowering experience for them.
2. Realising that they were able to interact successfully with individuals of a different age and background.
3. Realising that they would be able to apply their skills and experience to other community activities.

Indeed it is apparent that the confidence mentors gained from taking part in Futures Together was already being applied in other areas of their lives. For example, 9 out of the 10 mentors interviewed noted that they had either already started new volunteering opportunities or were keen to do so in the near future:

'Volunteering as a mentor gave me the confidence to try other things. I'm now with St John's ambulance and probably wouldn't have approached St John's ambulance if I hadn't had experience of mentoring. After the mentoring I thought 'ok I can do this!'

The TimeBank Project Coordinator reinforces what the mentors are saying, noting that she has observed a huge change in the confidence of the younger mentors:

'It has massively impacted on their confidence. Some of the girls in the mentor training have been very shy and I have been reluctant about matching them fearing that they will not have the confidence to mentor. However it has been amazing to see how mentoring brings them out of their shell.'

3.1.4. Confidence: Mentees

Project Aim:

Older Muslim women would have increased their skills and confidence with regards to English language and digital literacy.

Project Performance:

- 76% of mentees who completed the evaluation forms felt that their confidence in their English language had increased.
- 8 out of 10 mentors interviewed, and 61% of those that completed evaluation forms, felt that they had helped their mentee to improve their confidence in their English language abilities.
- 94 % of mentees who completed the evaluation form felt that mentoring support had helped them to feel more confident using a computer.
- 83% of mentors that completed the evaluation form felt that mentoring support had helped their mentee to feel more confident using a computer.

Successes:

As mentioned earlier, Futures Together made a significant difference to the confidence of mentees in their English language and computer skills. Moreover it improved their confidence in their ability to learn and develop more generally. As one mentee who was interviewed stated:

'It (Futures Together) has been really good for my confidence. Thanks to all the community for this project – it gives a person confidence to learn and that is important.'

Clearly the mentoring went further than just improving confidence in the two specialist areas of English and computer skills and also helped her to feel more confident in her wider ability to learn and develop. This was true for most of the mentees interviewed, with 6 out of the 8 noting that taking part in Futures Together had given them the confidence to seek out other learning opportunities. Although most of the women had not started any new courses when interviewed, they were positive about doing so in the near future. Further research would be needed to follow this up and see if this new found confidence had longer term implications.

3.1.5. Leadership

Project Aim:

Younger Muslim women will have improved their leadership skills.

Project Performance:

- 9 out of the 10 mentors interviewed stated that taking part in Futures Together has helped them to improve their leadership skills.

- 95% of those mentors that completed the evaluation forms felt that their leadership skills had improved as a result of taking part in Futures Together.
- 100% of those who completed the evaluation forms felt their communication skills had improved either a lot or a little.

Successes:

For most participants, being a mentor involved leadership. They felt responsible for leading the relationship and facilitating the learning of the mentee. Mentors spoke about having to plan and prepare sessions in advance and to guide mentees through them:

'It definitely did do a lot of good for leadership skills as it is the first time I have had to go out and cater for someone's needs and take the lead on the support. Even though I planned the sessions we didn't plan details so I had to think on my feet constantly and be a lot more flexible which is a useful skill to have.'

Mentors identified a number of key leadership skills developed in the course of the mentoring relationship. These included: planning, decision making, putting the needs of others first, patience, flexibility, the ability to think on your feet and time management skills. Planning and flexibility were the skills cited most by mentors.

Improved communication skills were also mentioned as relevant to leadership skills, as one mentor in their evaluation form noted:

'I am more clear in my communication and more patient as a result of mentoring.'

Challenges:

At the start of the relationship some mentors who were interviewed reported feeling awkward and uncomfortable about their leadership role, owing to the difference in age between them and their mentee. Mentors were used to relationships in which the older individual took the leadership role and it seemed to go against convention for the younger person to be doing this:

'I would take the initiative and put things in place. In the beginning I was a bit uncomfortable doing this as she was older than me so giving her suggestions of what she had to do was difficult. I am Afghani too so as [my mentee was] an elder I should be very respectful and it was therefore strange and uncomfortable to tell her what to do.'

Whilst this did not ultimately prevent them from improving their leadership skills, it is an interesting dynamic to note and potentially something that could be discussed and explored with mentors in the training session. The mentees who were interviewed were largely unfazed by this dynamic in the relationship and were just happy to be receiving support.

3.1.6. Intergenerational relationships: Mentors

Project Aim:

- Local intergenerational contacts in London will have been improved and a new network established.

Project Performance:

- 61% of mentors who completed the evaluation forms stated that taking part in Futures Together had given them a more positive perception of older people. A number of those who stated that it had not given them a more positive perception explained that they already had positive perceptions of older people.
- 50% of mentors who completed the evaluation form stated that taking part in Futures Together had made them feel more confident communicating with older people. Most of those that stated they did not feel more confident said this was because they were already confident communicating with older people.

Successes:

The project was successful in promoting positive relationships between individuals of different generations and improving contact between older and younger Muslim women.

As detailed in the previous section, the mentors who were interviewed found the relationship more challenging than the mentees as they experienced a role-reversal with regard to leadership and age and this initially made them uncomfortable. Whilst claiming not to have held preconceived ideas about their mentee based on age, it was apparent that mentors held loose stereotypes about the older women. For example, assuming that the older women were disengaged with their local community and not very interested in learning and developing on a personal level. Mentors interviewed admitted that they were surprised to find the older women still engaged in their local community and interested in their own personal development:

'I was quite surprised by how much she was really interested. Lots of different things such as literature and reading and other outside interests. My grandma really isn't interested in a lot outside the home so I was quite surprised and this made me rethink my ideas about older people. I realise that they are not all boring.'

Most mentors had only experienced relationships with older women who were part of their family network and therefore this relationship represented something new. As the TimeBank Project Coordinator notes:

'Younger mentors already have lots of contact with older Muslim women in the family, but to have this contact with a stranger is a very different thing. They have built friendly and respectful relationships. Older Muslim women can give advice and there is mutual exchange and mutual respect.'

Spending time with an older woman outside of their family made mentors feel more confident about communicating and engaging with people who were older than them and made them realise that they had things in common:

'She was quite modern. We got on really well and were planning to meet up afterwards but she is abroad still. We have become good friends. This was surprising to me as I thought I maybe wouldn't get along with someone who was older...I do have older friends but not above 40 so I suppose this was new. I could communicate with her - it was fine and she was just like having a normal friend my age.'

Challenges:

There is little evidence to suggest that a new and meaningful intergenerational network was formed as a result of interactions between mentors and mentees in Futures Together. By

definition the mentoring relationships were one-to-one and operated in isolation from each other, thereby restricting the chance of such a development. It is clear however that TimeBank tried to create opportunities for a network to be established by organising social events which brought different mentors and mentees together to share experiences and celebrate success and setting up an online Facebook group.

3.1.7. Intergenerational relationships: Mentees

Project Aim:

- Local intergenerational contacts in London will have been improved and a new network established.
- Muslim women will have increased their understanding of and engagement with the issues facing young Muslims in British society.

Project Performance:

- 65% of mentees who completed the evaluation form stated that taking part in Futures Together had given them a more positive perception of younger people. A number of those who stated that it had not given them a more positive perception explained that this was because they already had positive perceptions of younger people.
- 9 out of the 10 mentors interviewed said that they did not discuss with their mentee what life was like in Britain for young Muslim women.
- 7 out of 8 mentees interviewed said that they did not discuss with their mentor what life was like in Britain for young Muslim women.

Successes:

Age was not perceived as an issue for the mentees. They likened their relationships with their mentors to family relationships with daughters and granddaughters... As such conversations directly based on young people's experiences and attitudes did not come up. Mentees saw their mentors as individuals and did not make generalisations about them on the basis of age:

'Age is not a problem it depends on the inside of the person – they may be old in years but inside they are young – depends on their life, family, background, studying everyone is different is my opinion.'

Clearly the interaction that mentees had with their mentors helped to give them a more positive perception of young people, however it was apparent from both the interview and the evaluation forms that the older women did not hold negative perceptions of younger people in the first place.

Challenges:

Whilst taking part in Futures Together clearly increased their engagement with younger women, mentors and mentees did not talk explicitly about what life is like in Britain for young people and what issues they face. The main reason for this is that age was not seen as a barrier by most of the participants, mentors and mentees alike, and also because the focus of the relationship was practical in terms of working to improve English language and computer skills. This tended to give the relationships focus and structure and meant that few participants felt inclined to discuss wider issues in their lives.

3.1.8. Community Participation: Mentors

Aim:

Muslim women will have increased their active participation in their communities and in utilising services with 10% taking up leading roles in community groups.

Project Performance:

- 44% of mentors who completed evaluation forms had been inspired to join community groups and/or networks as a result of their experience of mentoring on Futures Together.
- 78% who completed the evaluation forms said that they had been inspired by their experience to volunteer again in the future.
- Of the 10 mentors who were interviewed, 4 had started participating in other community groups and activities as a direct result in taking part in Futures Together, 4 were actively looking for of a community group/activity to get involved with and 2 said they would not undertake further community work owing to time constraints and other commitments.

Successes:

For mentors, Futures Together had a major impact on their desire to participate in other community and volunteering activities. Out of the 10 mentors interviewed, 4 had already joined new community activities and groups as a direct result of taking part in Futures Together and 4 were actively looking. Only 2 said that they would not undertake further community or volunteering work in the near future and this was because of time and study commitments. 2 mentors are now involved in fundraising activities for other organisations, 1 has become a local language mentor and another is volunteering for St John Ambulance:

'This experience has made me want to do more for the community and more volunteering as it is quite rewarding. This project inspired me to volunteer with St John Ambulance which I enjoy. I go to meetings once a week and about three events per year. I have liked it so much that I am going to apply to join and train for the emergency services in September. It has given me the confidence to go for it.'

Whilst the project clearly impacted on mentors' desire to take part in further community activities after completing their relationships, they were divided about whether they felt more involved in their own community whilst they were mentoring. 6 of those interviewed said they felt more involved in their community and 4 said that they did not. For these 4, community was defined as the area local to where they lived and the volunteering had taken place quite a distance from where they lived and where they considered their community to be. As a result they felt they were involved in someone else's community rather than their own.

Challenges:

More research is needed to assess whether mentors go on to take up leading roles in community groups, particularly as this is likely to be something that occurs in the longer term. The mentors that had gone on to join community groups so far were not in leading roles.

3.1.9 Community Participation: Mentees

Aim:

Muslim women will have increased their active participation in their communities and in utilising services with 10% taking up leading roles in community groups.

Project Performance:

- None of the mentees who were interviewed or completed the evaluation forms had joined any new community groups or activities since participating in Futures Together.
- For 2 out of the 8 mentees interviewed, the fact that they had made significant progress using a computer meant that they felt more able to participate in their community as they could find local information and news on the internet.
- 47% of mentees who completed an evaluation form said that taking part in Futures Together had improved their ability to access community services and information.

Successes:

Although the project didn't directly make a significant impact on the community participation of mentees the majority of those who were interviewed wanted to continue their learning, either through more mentoring or formal classes and thereby would stay engaged in the community at some level. More research is needed to assess whether mentees do in fact continue with their learning after Futures Together in the longer term.

Challenges:

Mentees who were interviewed felt that the project had had a limited impact on their community participation, as they were already happy with their level of involvement. For most, they had signed up to the project because they wanted to develop personally rather than because they were motivated to play a larger role in the community.

As the TimeBank Project Coordinator noted when she was interviewed:

'I have been trying to encourage the women to engage in more community activities but they don't have time and most of the things they want to take part in take place at the centre so they feel that they don't need to venture beyond. These women are busy with children and grandchildren. Mentoring has been appealing because it is flexible and it takes place in the centre they are already familiar with.'

3.2. General Outcomes

3.2.1. The value of mentoring

The one-to-one nature of the mentoring relationship was viewed as beneficial by all the mentees interviewed. One mentee commented:

'I think that one to one is better as the learner and tutor spend all the time together and you need lots of information and you can ask about anything... I took lessons at College before and we were 5 and it was not easy to learn. When I needed to ask something or some advice I called the teacher and they are with another student – the teacher did not like me because my English was not good and I would need things repeated.'

Nearly all of the mentees described classes they had previously attended as being poor learning environments where they had to compete with other students for support. By contrast, mentoring offered dedicated support tailored to their needs in a non-judgemental setting. This meant that they were comfortable making mistakes and asking questions and could therefore maximise their learning time. All of the women indicated that they would like more one-to-one support in the future. Three of the mentees indicated that the voluntary nature of the mentoring was highly beneficial for them as they could not afford to pay for classes.

This finding correlates with OFcom data from their 2007 Media literacy audit which researched preferences for learning ICT skills. Out of 2905 adults interviewed 48% said they had a preference for learning from friends and family and only 6% from going to classes.¹¹

Mentors also agreed that the one-to-one nature of mentoring is a uniquely effective way of offering support both in the interviews and at the workshop.

'When working one-to-one you can get to the bottom of what someone needs as an individual rather than what the group needs. Mentoring is more effective than having classroom based sessions.'

A number of mentors felt that other older women could benefit from this type of mentoring support and advocated that the project be extended to other parts of the capital.

3.2.2. Community Cohesion

Most definitions of community cohesion agree that one indicator is the number of strong and meaningful relationships created between people of different backgrounds.¹² As a report by DCLG in June 2007 noted:

*'Projects that facilitate meaningful interaction between people are seen as important. They are found to be effective in promoting trust, awareness of commonality and positive relationship among participants, and to some extent this impacts positively on the wider community.'*¹³

As demonstrated above, in the sections on personal outcomes, the mentoring relationships formed in Futures Together encourage positive and meaningful interaction between people of different backgrounds (young and old) and therefore contribute directly to community cohesion.

In addition, the PSA 21 says that another indicator of community cohesion is a thriving third sector which promotes volunteering and social enterprise. Futures Together has been effective at creating and promoting volunteering and community involvement. As mentioned previously, nearly all of the mentors interviewed had either become involved in another community activity or were actively seeking one out as a result of taking part in the project. This is more evidence that the project supports community cohesion.

¹¹ Freshminds and UK Online centres, Does the internet improve lives? 2009

¹² Public Service Agreement 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities, Oct 2007, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, Our Shared Future, 2008

¹³ CLG, What works in community cohesion – research study conducted for CLG and committee for integration and cohesion, June 2007

3.2.3. Preventing Violent Extremism

There is no evidence to suggest that Futures Together increases participants' knowledge of violent extremist issues, thus enabling them to better challenge such ideologies and identify and support vulnerable young people who may be at risk.

Indeed the Prevent agenda, and the funding available to support it, has come under serious criticism by many groups on the basis that it only focuses on Muslim communities. The 6th report by the House of Commons Preventing Violent Extremism DCLG Committee published in March 2010 recognised this noting that:

'The fact that Prevent only focuses on al-Qaida inspired terrorism has both added to feelings of alienation and stigma in Muslim communities and brought about deep resentment in non Muslim communities on the basis that funding is being given to Muslims and not other communities that need it.'

However, much of the literature on preventing violent extremism emphasises the need to build community based responses to violent extremism. A paper published by DCLG in July 2008 emphasises that one of the key contributors to prevent is:

*'Building strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.'*¹⁴

This is something that Futures Together has been able to do successfully.

In addition much of the literature suggests that community cohesion and preventing violent extremism are linked. As a recent government committee paper notes:

*'Building strong and cohesive communities and tackling exclusion is not only critical in addressing the set of risk factors which may lead an individual to violent extremism, but is also very important in itself.'*¹⁵

Here is the suggestion that by building more cohesive communities you can increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism and enable them to be better equipped to identify those within them who are at risk of falling into extremism and take action against them. In fact, the Institute of Community Cohesion argues that the Prevent agenda should be part of a wider community cohesion programme as, in comparison to specific Prevent initiatives:

*'Community cohesion programmes are more able to tackle the underlying issues that breed resentment, fear, hatred and to provide the skills to enable communities to learn and live and prosper with difference.'*¹⁶

As demonstrated above it is clear that Futures Together makes a positive contribution to community cohesion by bringing together women from different backgrounds and enabling them to develop meaningful relationships. If we take the argument that building more cohesive communities helps to make communities more resilient to violent extremism then it can be argued that Futures Together indirectly contributes to preventing violent extremism.

¹⁴ CLG, Preventing Violent Extremism – Next Steps for Communities, July 2008

¹⁵ House of Commons, Preventing Violent Extremism Communities and Local Government Committee, 6th report of session 2009 -2010, Ordered by the House of Commons 16th March 2010

¹⁶ ICOCO, PVE submission to communities and local government committee, Nov 2009

The TimeBank Project Coordinator agrees that the project has more of an indirect and long term role noting that:

'Futures Together plays a more long term role. The older women are more aware of what young people can do on the Internet and understand what they are up to. Having more access to information and more awareness of what their children or grandchildren are doing is positive. Improved confidence using the internet means they can interact more with the younger generation and understand what they are doing. They can chat to children on their level. I think that this improves the generational and cultural gap which is present.'

3.2.4 An unintended outcome – intercultural relationships

One of the unintended outcomes of the project is that it has brought together women from different cultural backgrounds. Whilst the women all had the fact that they were Muslim in common, they came from distinctly different countries and cultures. This is something that the Wellbeing Coordinator from the Cultural Heritage Centre highlighted in terms of the women accessing the centre:

'The majority of our community are mixed Islamic minority groups – Iran, Iraq, Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Somalia - it is a wide community from everywhere, not only one community.'

Looking through the demographic information of the women that were matched together, it is apparent that 29 of the 31 matches made bring together women from different cultural backgrounds, for example, someone from an Egyptian background being matched with someone with an Iraqi background or someone with a Bangladeshi background being matched with someone from a Somali background. As the TimeBank Project Coordinator notes:

'The Muslim community is very diverse and can be very separate according to countries of origin and cultural differences. If someone is from a Bangladeshi origin they are largely used to engaging with others from that background. If you match this individual with someone from a different background such as Moroccan, this has a powerful impact as these two would not normally come together.'

The TimeBank Project Coordinator believes that this has helped women to become more open to interaction with any other Muslim woman regardless of their cultural and country background and that this has served to challenge stereotypes that the women hold about each other. A handful of the mentors who completed the evaluation forms also picked up on this element of the project noting that it gave them the opportunity to learn about someone else's culture. As one mentor in their evaluation form notes:

'We enjoyed the entire process, we also enjoyed the cultural differences between us.'

This evidence of intercultural interaction further strengthens the finding that Futures Together serves to support community cohesion by bringing together people from different backgrounds.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. Both mentors and mentees noted that 12 hours was not enough time to achieve what they wanted particularly when they were aiming to improve both English language and digital literacy. In addition mentors and mentees both commented that mentees found it difficult to retain what they learned from one session to the

next. It is recommended that the length of the mentoring relationship is increased. Nearly 100% of pairs commented that they wanted to spend more time together. Mentors and mentees suggested that spending a period of 6 months together meeting every week would have been a better amount of time. In addition it is recommended that mentees be signposted to further learning opportunities once they have completed the mentoring in order to enable them to continue to hone and retain their skills.

- 4.2. Low language and literacy levels, in addition to low levels of confidence, in some mentees made it difficult for them to engage with the project and to make progress in their language and computer skills. It is recommended that the language levels of mentees are assessed by TimeBank prior to matching them and that enrolment criteria be developed. This would ensure that all mentees are of a minimum standard required to benefit from the project. Those who do not meet the enrolment criteria could be signposted to more specialist courses or support.
- 4.3. Some mentors said that they felt ill equipped to effectively support mentees with English language, particularly when their language level was very low. It is therefore recommended that training and resources are improved for mentors in this area. The provision of an additional training session focussed specifically on supporting someone whose first language is not English is recommended along with the availability of more teaching resources such as textbooks, worksheets and flashcards. Mentors could also add this additional training to their CV. It should be noted that since this evaluation began TimeBank have already started to redesign their support tools. For example they have recently developed a toolkit designed to help individuals with low levels of English language to learn computer skills. The development of this toolkit was guided by feedback gained from mentors and will help mentees to practice their skills at home on their own thereby increasing the chances that new skills learned with their mentors will be retained in the longer term.
- 4.4. A number of mentors wanted to continue to volunteer on the project once they had completed their 12 hours of mentoring and felt that the skills they had developed as a result of their mentoring experience would benefit the project. It is recommended that TimeBank create opportunities of mentor engagement once the mentoring relationship has ended. Opportunities for future engagement might include mentoring another individual or talking about their experiences to new mentors. Considering the time and resource already invested in training and support by TimeBank it would make sense to continue to work with them in order to benefit from the project.¹⁷
- 4.5. The one to one approach of mentoring is an extremely effective method for supporting older women to improve their English language skills, computer skills and confidence. It means that learning can be tailored to the needs of the individual and provides a safe learning environment particularly for individuals that have previously had negative experiences of formal learning environments. It is recommended that TimeBank incorporate one to one mentoring support into future projects.
- 4.6. Some mentors described feeling awkward that they were required to take on a leadership role in the mentoring relationship when they were the younger

¹⁷ TimeBank does this via its general brokering and matching service and should this project receive future funding then mentors will be offered opportunities to stay involved in the project and utilise their expertise.

participant. Mentors were used to relationships in which the older individual took the leadership role. It is recommended that this challenge be discussed and addressed during mentor training in order to prepare mentors better for this role. Former mentors could be asked to contribute their ideas and experiences.

5. Support

Both mentors and mentees were satisfied with the support they received from TimeBank. 99% of mentors and 90% of mentees who completed the evaluation form described the support as excellent or good.¹⁸

'The Project Coordinator was always there and you could ask her if you had problems and once or twice I could not get my mentee so I called the project coordinator. We were given 2 handbooks, one was about mentoring and Futures Together and the other tips about English and computer skills.'

Quite a high proportion of mentors and mentees did not answer this question on support and therefore it is hard to ascertain whether they were unhappy with the support or simply did not complete the form fully. Certainly all the women who were interviewed were happy with the support they received.

The Wellbeing Coordinator from the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre believed that the mentees were very happy with the support they received from TimeBank, noting how the Project Coordinator spent time developing relationships with them and offering her support:

'Dahlia [Futures Together Project Coordinator] is very good and very active and helpful and calm and cares. She comes and meets the women first to guide her before bringing the student. The women always ask about her.'

6. Project Future

Having received funding from DCLG to deliver Futures Together, TimeBank sought opportunities to maximise the impact of the project nationwide and collect and share learning from project delivery. TimeBank achieved supplementary funding from Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales in January 2010 and has developed a computer skills toolkit that will be distributed to Muslim organisations and mosques nationwide in order to reach further Muslim women. TimeBank will also be delivering four national workshops involving 'taster' sessions to encourage more Muslim women to become digitally included. The workshops will be delivered with support from young Muslim volunteers who will use the toolkit to support groups of Muslim women to become more digitally literate. One of the workshops was delivered in October 2010 and the rest will be delivered throughout 2011.

TimeBank are currently looking into expanding the project to Birmingham in partnership with the Edas Foundation who already has a wide reach across the local area. The women supported by this organisation have low levels of literacy and have completed little or no formal education.

¹⁸ Please note that only 10 mentees and 12 mentors answered this question.

7. Conclusion

Futures Together has been successful in achieving the majority of its aims and has clearly had a positive impact on participants.

English language skills

Participants felt that the project improved the English language skills of the mentees and in particular it helped them to feel more confident in their ability. However, what they could achieve was limited by the short timeframe of the mentoring relationship, with 12 hours simply not enough time in which to make a significant and sustained difference particularly with those who had low levels of literacy.

Computer skills

A great deal of progress was made in the area of computer skills, where mentors were able to demonstrate the benefits of using a computer and give their mentees step by step guidance in how to do so. Having someone sat next to them who was computer literate, and who they could ask questions, helped mentees to feel more confident. Mentees are now using computers and the internet for a variety of functions including communication, gaining information and accessing online services and therefore the project has facilitated the digital inclusion of these older women. Mentees wanted to learn and progress more and again the time constraints of the relationship were frustrating for them. Moreover, follow up activities would be necessary to ensure the new skills and confidence developed are sustained and therefore able to make a really difference to their lives.

Confidence

The confidence of both mentors and mentees was improved by taking part in Futures Together. For the mentees this was related to the new English and computer skills that they were acquiring and for mentors from skills they were developing, such as leadership skills and communication skills, and also from the satisfaction of realising that they could help someone else.

Community

The project inspired mentors to take a more active role in their community with most seeking out opportunities for further involvement in community activities or volunteering. In fact a number had already started volunteering on other projects. Conversely the project did not encourage older women to become more actively involved in their community. Most were already satisfied with their level of involvement and their motivations for joining the project had been for personal development.

Bringing generations together

The intergenerational element of the project was important to the mentors who held loose stereotypes about the older women and their capabilities when they first joined the project. Most mentors had previously not had the opportunity to interact with older women outside of their family circle and this relationship was therefore significant in showing them that they could do so successfully. The majority of mentors and mentees felt that the project had given them a more positive perception of the other generation.

Benefits of mentoring

The one-to-one nature of the relationship is extremely valuable, offering mentees support tailored to their needs and a safe learning environment where they feel confident to ask questions and comfortable to make mistakes. Mentees contrasted the positive learning environment of mentoring with previous negative experiences in the classroom showing the vital role mentoring plays for those who have been alienated from more traditional methods of learning.

Community cohesion

The project also contributed positively to community cohesion by bringing together individuals from different backgrounds (young and old) and offering them opportunities for meaningful interaction and mutual understanding. In addition, an unexpected benefit of the project was that it brought together women from different national and cultural backgrounds, encouraging communication and understanding between groups that wouldn't normally mix and further contributing to community cohesion.

Preventing violent extremism

There is no evidence to suggest that Futures Together makes any direct contribution to preventing violent extremism and it didn't increase participants' knowledge of violent extremist issues, thus enabling them to better challenge such ideologies and identify and support vulnerable young people who may be at risk. However, arguably the positive contribution the project makes to community cohesion supports the preventing violent extremism agenda by increasing the resilience of communities. More research is required to look into this area.

Key recommendation

A key recommendation for improving the positive outcomes of this project is to increase the duration of the mentoring relationship. This would enable mentors and mentees to achieve more and help to ensure that the skills and confidence developed were sustained into the future.

Appendix 1: Cultural diversity of matches

Match	Mentee Origin/ Language	Mentor Origin/ Language
1	Lebanese - Arabic	Pakistani - Urdu
2	Afghanistan - Farsi	Afghanistan- Pushtu
3	Moroccan - Arabic	Pakistani - Urdu
4	Iraqi - Arabic	Caribbean- English
5	Iraqi - Arabic	Egyptian- Arabic
6	Iraqi - Arabic	Egyptian- Arabic
7	Iraqi- Kurdish/ Arabic	English
8	Moroccan - Arabic	Indian- Gujarati
9	Moroccan- Arabic	Syrian- Arabic
10	Pakistani- Urdu	Bangladeshi
11	Moroccan- Arabic	Pakistani- Urdu
12	Moroccan - Arabic	Pakistani - Urdu
13	Moroccan - Arabic	Bangladeshi
14	Egyptian- Arabic	Bangladeshi
15	Iraqi- Arabic	Pakistani
16	Iraqi- Kurdish	Pakistani - Urdu
17	Iraqi- Arabic	Sri Lanka
18	Iraqi- Arabic	Pakistani
19	Iraqi- Arabic	Pakistani
20	Somali	Bangladeshi
21	Egyptian- Arabic	Bangladeshi
22	Moroccan - Arabic	Pakistani
23	Algerian- Arabic	American
24	Algerian- Arabic	Moroccan
25	Moroccan- Arabic	Pakistani
26	Moroccan- Arabic	Pakistani
27	Eritrean- Tigrinya/Arabic	Pakistani
28	Sudanese- Arabic	Nigerian
29	Moroccan- Arabic	Palestinian
30	Moroccan- Arabic	Moroccan
31	Palestinian- Arabic	Algerian

Appendix 2: Mentee Evaluation form results

Mentee	1. More confident using English	2. Increased confidence using a computer	3. Will continue using computers and Internet	4. Improved ability to access community services and information	5. Joined new community groups	6. More involved in Muslim community as a result of mentoring
Mentee 1	yes	yes	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentee 2	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Mentee 3	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Mentee 4	yes	yes	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentee 5	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes
Mentee 6	no	no answer	no	yes	no	no
Mentee 7	no	yes	no answer	no answer	no	no
Mentee 8	yes	yes	no answer	no answer	no	no
Mentee 9	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Mentee 10	yes	yes	no answer	no answer	no answer	no
Mentee 11	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Mentee 12	yes	yes	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentee 13	no	yes	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentee 14	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Mentee 15	yes	yes	yes	no	no answer	no answer
Mentee 16	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Mentee 17	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Yes	76%	94%	53%	47%	0%	35%
No	24%	0%	6%	12%	65%	35%
No Answer	0%	6%	41%	41%	35%	30%

1. Do you feel more confident using English as a result of the support you received from your mentor?
2. Has the support you received from you mentor helped you to feel more confident using a computer?
3. Are you going to continue using computers and the Internet?
4. Has the support you received from your mentor improved your ability to access community services and information?
5. Have you joined any new community groups or activities since you began meeting your mentor?
6. Do you feel more involved in your Muslim community as a result of your mentoring experience?

Mentee	7. More positive perception of YP	8. One to one support made a difference	9. Wanted more time with their mentor	10. Rate the support provided by the Project Coordinator
Mentee 1	no answer	no answer	yes	no answer
Mentee 2	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentee 3	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentee 4	no answer	no answer	yes	no answer
Mentee 5	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentee 6	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentee 7	yes	yes	no answer	excellent
Mentee 8	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentee 9	yes	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentee 10	no answer	no answer	yes	no answer
Mentee 11	yes	yes	yes	poor
Mentee 12	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentee 13	no answer	no answer	yes	no answer
Mentee 14	yes	yes	no answer	good
Mentee 15	no answer	no answer	yes	no answer
Mentee 16	yes	yes	yes	good
Mentee 17	yes	yes	yes	good
Yes	65%	59%	96%	Excellent: 35%
No	0%	0%	0%	Good: 18%
No Answer	35%	49%	4%	Poor: 6%
				No Answer: 41%

7. Has your relationship with your mentor given you a more positive perception of young Muslim people?

8. Did it make a difference that the support you received was on a one to one basis rather than in a group?

9. Would you have liked more time with your mentor? (Please note this was not a direct question but calculated regarding the number of mentees that mentioned this)

10. How would you rate the support provided by the Project Coordinator?

Appendix 3: Mentor Evaluation Form Results

Mentor	1. Mentee more confident communicating in English	2. Mentee understands more English	3. Mentee more confident using a computer and internet	4. Increased personal confidence	5. Improved communication skills
Mentor 1	no answer	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 2	yes	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 3	yes	no answer	yes	a lot	a little
Mentor 4	yes	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 5	yes	yes	yes	a little	a lot
Mentor 6	no	yes	no answer	a little	a little
Mentor 7	yes	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 8	no answer	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 9	no answer	no	no answer	a little	a little
Mentor 10	yes	yes	yes	a little	a lot
Mentor 11	no answer	no	no	a lot	a lot
Mentor 12	yes	no answer	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 13	yes	no answer	yes	a lot	a little
Mentor 14	no answer	no answer	yes	a lot	a little
Mentor 15	yes	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 16	yes	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 17	yes	yes	yes	a lot	a lot
Mentor 18	no	yes	yes	a little	a little
Yes	61%	67%	83%	A lot: 72%	A lot: 67%
No	11%	11%	5%	A little: 28%	A little: 33%
No answer	28%	22%	12%	No answer: 0%	Not at all: 0%
					No answer: 0%

1. Do you think your mentee is more confident communicating in English as a result of the support you have provided?
2. Do you think your mentee understands more English as a result of the support you have provided?
3. Do you think your mentee is more confident using a computer and accessing the Internet since receiving mentoring support?
4. Please assess how much you feel you've gained from your mentoring relationship in the area of confidence?
5. Please assess how much you feel you've gained from your mentoring relationship in the area of communication skills?

Mentor	6. Improved leadership skills	7. Made new friends	8. Opportunity for personal development	9. Opportunity for professional development and CV improvement
Mentor 1	a little	a little	a lot	a lot
Mentor 2	a lot	a little	a lot	a lot
Mentor 3	a lot	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 4	a little	a little	a lot	a little
Mentor 5	a little	not at all	a lot	a little
Mentor 6	a lot	not at all	no answer	a lot
Mentor 7	a lot	a little	a lot	a lot
Mentor 8	not at all	a little	a lot	a little
Mentor 9	a lot	a lot	a lot	a little
Mentor 10	a lot	a little	a lot	a lot
Mentor 11	a lot	a little	a lot	a lot
Mentor 12	a lot	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 13	a little	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 14	a lot	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 15	a lot	a lot	a lot	a lot
Mentor 16	a lot	a lot	a lot	a lot
Mentor 17	a lot	a little	a lot	a lot
Mentor 18	a little	not at all	a little	a lot
A lot	67%	17%	67%	56%
A little	27%	44%	5%	22%
Not at all	6%	11%	39%	22%
No answer	0%	28%	0%	0%

6. Please assess how much you feel you've gained from your mentoring relationship in the area of leadership skills?

7. Please assess how much you feel you've gained from your mentoring relationship in the area of making new friends?

8. Please assess how much you feel you've gained from your mentoring relationship in the area of personal development?

9. Please assess how much you feel you've gained from your mentoring relationship in the area of professional development?

Mentor	10. Joined new community groups/activities	11. Have been inspired to volunteer again	12. More positive perception of older Muslim women	13. Wanted more time with their mentee	14. Rate the support of the Project Coordinator
Mentor 1	yes	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentor 2	yes	yes	yes	no answer	excellent
Mentor 3	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 4	no	yes	no	no answer	excellent
Mentor 5	yes	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentor 6	no	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentor 7	yes	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentor 8	no	yes	yes	no answer	no answer
Mentor 9	yes	yes	yes	no answer	excellent
Mentor 10	yes	yes	no	yes	excellent
Mentor 11	yes	yes	yes	yes	excellent
Mentor 12	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 13	no answer	no answer	no answer	yes	no answer
Mentor 14	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
Mentor 15	no	yes	yes	no answer	no answer
Mentor 16	yes	yes	yes	no answer	excellent
Mentor 17	no	yes	no	yes	excellent
Mentor 18	no	yes	yes	yes	good
Yes	44%	78%	61%	50%	Excellent: 61%
No	34%	0%	17%	0%	Good: 5%
No answer	23%	22%	22%	50%	No Answer: 34%

10. Have you joined any new community groups as a result of your mentoring experience?

11. Has your experience of mentoring inspired you to volunteer again in the future?

12. Has your relationship with your mentee given you a more positive perception of older Muslim people?

13. Would you have liked more time with your mentee? (Please note this was not a direct question but calculated regarding the number of mentors that mentioned this.)

14. Please rate the support you received from your Project Coordinator.