



TimeBank Shoulder to Shoulder Online Mentoring Pilot

Final Evaluation Report

December 2020



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Be a volunteer



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. The Shoulder to Shoulder Online pilot matched vulnerable veterans with a volunteer mentor. Once paired, mentors and mentees met regularly on the Odro video conferencing platform to talk, develop and implement a plan to achieve lasting change. This included encouraging them to access support and care services outside of the home. A total of 23 mentees worked with their mentors to set and achieve goals over the course of an average of twelve sessions. Funded by the Forces in Mind Trust, and delivered by TimeBank, the pilot ran over 18 months.
- ii. There is clear, positive evidence that Shoulder to Shoulder Online has achieved both its objectives: the technology used is fit for purpose and the online mentoring has supported mentees to achieve positive change and had a significant impact on their lives and wellbeing.
- iii. Odro has proven to be an effective platform for online mentoring with veterans, which both mentors and mentees felt comfortable and confident using. The efforts of the Senior Project Co-ordinator were, however, key in minimising difficulties during set-up. Odro's ease of access meant it was particularly appropriate for mentoring, and for some it was better than other platforms. Some minor issues with functionality could be addressed through additional training, but overall the training and support received from the project team and Odro meant issues were usually easily resolved.
- iv. Mentees, mentors and referral partners reported high levels of satisfaction with the approach to online mentoring adopted in the pilot. While there are some small areas for improvement, it was generally felt to be appropriate and effective for those who participated. Online mentoring widened accessibility in a way that face-to-face programmes cannot. This was particularly the case during the nationwide lockdown imposed between March and June 2020 at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, when people were confined to their homes, but participants agreed it would continue to be an important approach in the future.
- v. The pilot has impacted mentees in a number of important ways. For some the main benefit was to their health and wellbeing at a time of particular hardship, when there was a risk of this deteriorating further. The social connection provided by the mentoring has been vital in reducing isolation, and in helping mentees feel comfortable opening up to their mentors. For many the benefits went much further and evidence of positive, potentially lasting change is apparent. The pilot has helped to enhance mentee's sense of confidence, introduced some stability and routine, and given them support to achieve their goals and improve their lives.
- vi. Volunteer mentors and referral partners also benefitted from the pilot. Mentors have felt a sense of satisfaction and increased confidence from supporting their mentees and have gained valuable skills and knowledge. Referral partners have found an additional support mechanism that can be signposted to their veterans.
- vii. There is widespread support for rolling out the approach used in this pilot. Crucially, this was perceived as having the potential to increase engagement with services and making veteran support services more accessible and inclusive. This has been particularly true

during lockdown when much face-to-face support from specialist support agencies was withdrawn.

viii. Several lessons have been identified which should be considered by organisations seeking to run a similar programme in the future:

- The support provided by the pilot team was recognised, appreciated and vital to the success of the pilot. It is therefore important that a Senior Project Co-ordinator's time and skills are used as efficiently as possible.
- Providing devices to those without access to technology was vital to ensuring inclusivity, but a significant investment of time is required to set these up for users.
- Careful matching of mentors with mentees was essential to the success of a pairing. If a match needs to change, it is important to have conversations with the mentee around their feelings about a new mentor.
- Future programmes should be clear that the focus is on time-limited and goals-based mentoring, rather than befriending or counselling. It is important, however, that there is a balance between goal-setting and general conversation, to build a relationship and to make the mentoring a positive and fun experience. Ensuring both mentors and mentees understand how long the mentoring lasts, and of next steps available to mentees, will help pairs work towards a positive ending.
- There should be a flexible approach to goal-setting, allowing mentors to do this in the way which best suits the personalities, priorities and circumstances of their mentee. This in turn maximises engagement and results.
- Suggestions for additional training and support included demonstrating how to screen-share with Odro, shortening training for those experienced with video platforms, creating a centralised resource database with useful information and links for mentors, and offering participants the opportunity to meet their mentee or mentor peers in an online group setting on a more social basis.

1. Introduction

The pilot

- 1.1. The Shoulder to Shoulder Online pilot matched vulnerable veterans with a volunteer mentor. Once paired, mentors and mentees met regularly on a video conferencing platform to talk, develop and implement a plan to achieve lasting change. Funded by the Forces in Mind Trust, and delivered by TimeBank, the pilot ran over 18 months.
- 1.2. The pilot built on learning from a previous face-to-face mentoring programme, Shoulder to Shoulder Erskine. This programme sought to continue the success of the previous programme and extend its reach through online delivery. It is the first online mentoring project of its kind to be offered to ex-Service men and women in Scotland.
- 1.3. Like the previous programme, Shoulder to Shoulder Online aimed to reduce mentee's social isolation, improve positive mental health and help vulnerable veterans connect with sources of support. The pilot aimed to engage 30 mentees, offering them an average of one-hour support weekly or fortnightly for three to six months.
- 1.4. Mentors worked with veterans to set and achieve goals over the course of twelve sessions. The focus, routine and structured support was designed to provide mentees with the confidence and motivation to make positive, lasting changes in their lives. This included encouraging them to access support and care services outside of the home.

Evaluation

- 1.5. This report presents The Lines Between's evaluation of the Shoulder to Shoulder Online pilot. Specifically, we focus on the evidence in relation to two evaluation strands, which assess whether:
 - The technology being used for the online platform is appropriate and supports change (i.e. is the technology fit for purpose?) – explored in chapter 3.
 - The overall approach of using online mentoring supports positive change for the beneficiaries – explored across chapters 4 and 5. The former considers the advantages of the online mentoring approach adopted in the pilot and the latter describes how it impacted participants.
- 1.6. We also highlight additional insights which are worthy of consideration should the programme be scaled up and rolled out more widely in the future (chapter 6).
- 1.7. Our findings are based on 45 conversations with 32 mentors, mentees, project staff and referral partners at various stages in the pilot. We also analysed secondary information including participant profile data, case notes and outcome measurements. More information on the methodology is available in Appendix 1.

2. Pilot Overview

- 2.1. This section summarises the structure and key features of Shoulder to Shoulder Online, detailing the number of participants and their characteristics.
- 2.2. The pilot began in May 2019. A short trial was conducted with a small number of initial pairings in summer 2019, which provided insight into the best approaches to use when the full pilot was launched in October 2019. The pilot ran until November 2020.
- 2.3. Table 2.1 summarises the structure and key features of the pilot.

Table 2.1: Overview of Shoulder to Shoulder Online

Recruitment	<p>A partnership approach was key to the recruitment of mentees and mentors. TimeBank’s Senior Project Co-ordinator liaised with a variety of veteran agencies¹ to explain the programme and find out if their service-users could benefit from it. Partners discussed the opportunity with potential mentees and referred individuals to TimeBank.</p> <p>TimeBank used their own networks and those of other volunteering organisations to promote the opportunity to become a mentor and generate a pool of volunteers.</p>
Mentor Training	<p>Volunteer mentors received full training in how to use Odro, the online video platform used to deliver the mentoring sessions, and in the practice of mentoring. This included training in goal-setting and in the use of SWEMWEBS² and Outcome Star tools to track progress. Some received this face-to-face while others participated in online sessions.</p>
Matching	<p>The Senior Project Co-ordinator matched mentees with mentors based on mentees’ particular needs, mentors’ skill-sets and experience and, crucially, on their shared interests and backgrounds.</p>
Mentoring	<p>Mentoring was designed to take place over approximately 12 one-hour sessions, delivered either weekly or fortnightly as best suited each pair.</p> <p>Mentors were to assist mentees in setting goals, using sessions to support them to achieve their goals and monitor progress over the 12-weeks using the provided tools.</p> <p>After each session mentors were asked to prepare a brief report to summarise the session and highlight whether any further support from the TimeBank team was required. The Senior Project Co-ordinator would review all reports and respond as required.</p>
Equipment	<p>Tablets were provided for participants who did not have their own computer or device.</p>

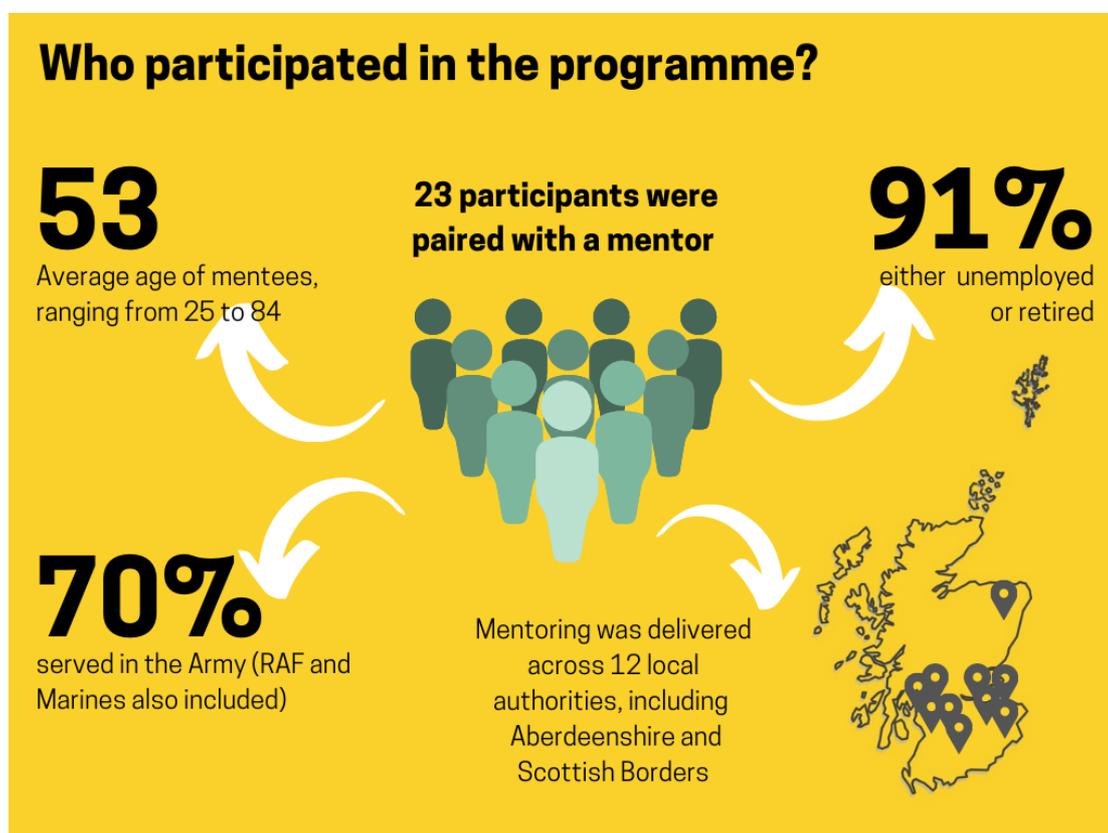
¹ These include, for example, Erskine, Legion Scotland, Veterans First Point Lothian, Venture Trust and SAMH.

² Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Participation

- 2.4. The pilot aimed to engage 30 mentees. By the end of the pilot, 23 mentees had been matched with a mentor³. Of these, five matches ended prematurely, either after a small number of sessions or in one instance before the first session⁴. While they did not experience the full mentoring programme, these mentees engaged with the Senior Project Co-ordinator who provided guidance and advice during the matching process.
- 2.5. Across all 23 pairs, 284 sessions were delivered – an average of 12 per pair as intended⁵. Several pairs chose to continue beyond 12 sessions because there was time to do so and their experience had been positive; the highest number of sessions for a single pairing was 27. On average this support was provided over approximately five months.
- 2.6. Figure 2.1 summarises the main demographic characteristics of the 23 mentees.

Figure 2.1: Mentee profile



- 2.7. Mentees had experience – either currently or in the past - of a range of challenges in their circumstances, mental health and wellbeing. For example, 78% experienced depression, 39% had issues with alcohol or drugs, 65% experienced suicidal thoughts in the past and 52% had issues with crowds, noise and transport. Over four fifths of participants reported experiencing more than one of these challenges.

³ Challenges around recruitment are discussed in section 6.11.

⁴ Four matches ended after approximately one month of support. This was for several reasons – family ill health, mentee’s own physical and mental health, and difficulties rearranging sessions.

⁵ Based on data to the end of October 2020, with 4 weeks of the pilot remaining. If we consider only those pairings that had 3 or more sessions, the total number of sessions was 280, averaging 14 sessions per pairing.

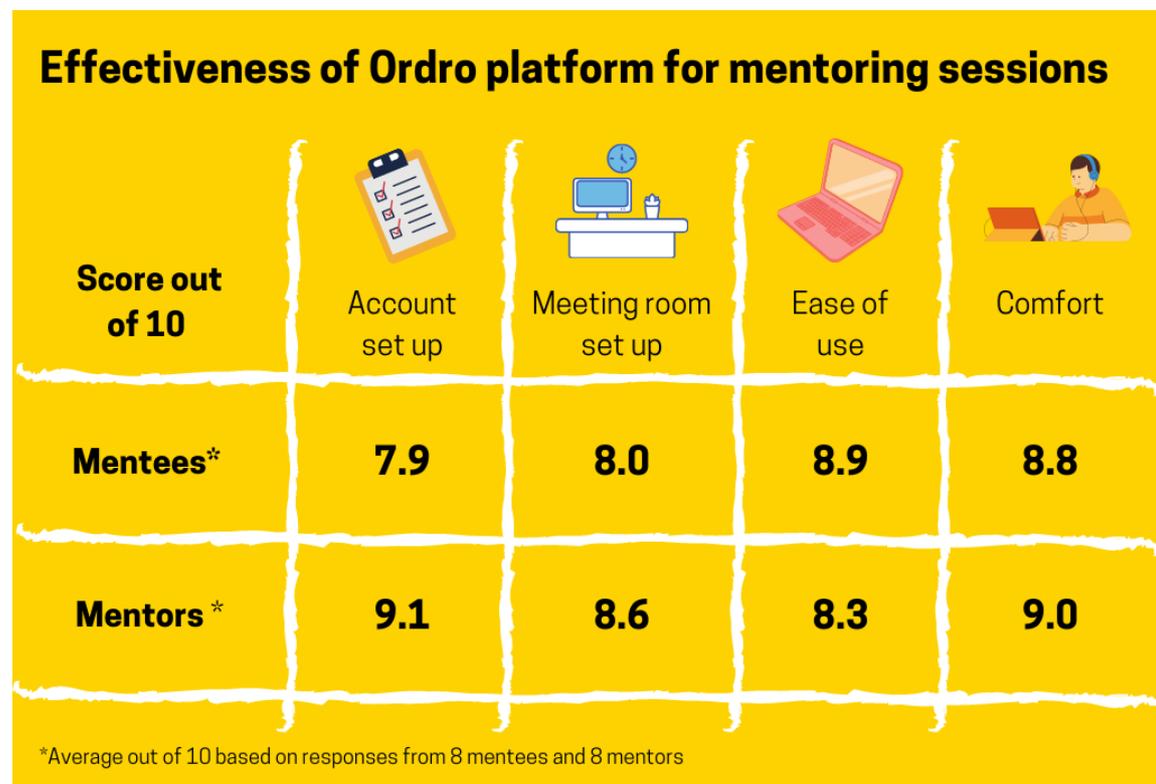
3. Appropriateness of the technology

- 3.1. Mentoring was delivered through the Odro video platform. This chapter evaluates how appropriate Odro was for online mentoring, summarising participants' views on its set-up, ease of use and functionality. Training was provided for mentors and we consider how effective this was. Comparisons with other online platforms have also been made.

Overall effectiveness of Odro

- 3.2. Odro has proven to be an effective platform for hosting the online mentoring. Mentors and mentees were asked four rating questions about Odro. The high scores shown in figure 3.1 clearly demonstrate their positive experience of the platform.

Figure 3.1: Participants' rating of Odro platform



Setup and training

- 3.3. Mentors received training in how to set-up and use Odro before the first session with their mentee. As demonstrated by the high scores above, few issues were encountered. Issues that did arise were largely considered to be teething problems due to mentors' lack of familiarity with the platform, or in some cases a lack of confidence with video call technology. Satisfaction with the set-up training was high; those who experienced initial difficulties acknowledged that no matter how much training you have it can take a couple of uses to become proficient.



“It was just a case of trying to remember, when you’ve never done something, it doesn’t matter how much somebody tells you the information it’s not until you’re actually doing it for yourself, and then you’re like ‘oh crikey, where was I meant to go with that again?’ But no it’s been absolutely fine ever since [the first session].” [Mentee]

- 3.4. Based on learning from the trial matches, the initial set-up process was streamlined significantly. The Senior Project Co-ordinator gave most mentees a tablet with a link to the Odro platform bookmarked in the web browser. This proactive approach to preparing the devices and ensuring easy access meant most mentees were able to use the platform with few barriers.
- 3.5. A small number of mentees did still experience set-up issues. Most were easily resolved with the support of their mentor, the TimeBank team and/or Odro support staff, with no further difficulties reported.

Ease of use and functionality

- 3.6. Once tablets and Odro accounts were set up, mentees and mentors found Odro very easy to use. This was the case whether they were a novice or experienced in video-call technology, and across a variety of devices including smart phones, tablets and laptops operating both Apple and Android systems. Participants especially liked how straightforward it was to access Odro via the bookmarked link and valued the simplicity of using the same link every time.
- 3.7. While a small number of issues were raised, such as occasional poor picture quality or Wi-Fi disconnecting, these were rare and typically easily resolved with mentor, project team or Odro support. As such, any issues encountered were not detrimental to the effectiveness of conversations between mentors and mentees.



*“It was actually very good; I was quite impressed by it I have to say.”
[Mentor with no previous experience of video call platforms]*

- 3.8. Locking the online meeting room to prevent people intruding during sessions was the most used of Odro’s features. Mentees, mentors and referral partners were happy with the security this offered. One referral partner said if they had not been satisfied with the security of the platform they would not have referred any of their service-users to the programme, underlining the importance of this feature. Odro also lets users record meetings, but this function was rarely used.
- 3.9. Some pairs used Odro’s screen sharing function, largely to assist with discussing and completing the Outcome Star and SWEMWEB tools. Some encountered difficulties with this. The Odro support team were able to provide instructions on how to adjust computer settings to enable screen share. Others felt they could manage without screen-share and did not seek any assistance. There is no evidence that the issues with screen-sharing were detrimental to the mentoring, but it was highlighted as a potential future training topic.

Comfort

- 3.10. Most participants felt at ease speaking with each other via Odro. Some described initial anxiety about using the technology but felt more comfortable once they started. Aside from those who had minor connection issues, participants found the technology enabled clear, fluent conversations.

“*The conversation does flow nicely on [Odro]. It feels like having a regular chat with someone. It’s a bit different because they’re not in the same room as you, but you forget that once you start talking.*” [Mentor]

Comparisons with other platforms

- 3.11. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, many mentees and mentors had experience of using other video call software, for work or to connect with other support services. This put them in a position to compare Odro with other platforms. Many preferred Odro; mentees liked the ease of access and lack of additional login information and passwords (e.g. as needed for Zoom). Mentors said they preferred Odro for mentoring as they did not have to think about sending a new link or downloading any new software.
- 3.12. This made Odro a particularly effective platform for mentoring where participants’ knowledge of this technology would likely vary. Some were, however, frustrated by the screen-share function which they found easier with other platforms.

“*It was loads easier than Zoom, where you have to put in the big number password and everything; this was much easier. This was just opening the file, and in you go.*” [Mentor]

SUMMARY: Odro is an effective platform for online mentoring with veterans, which both mentors and mentees felt comfortable and confident using. The efforts of the Senior Project Co-ordinator were, however, key in minimising difficulties during set-up. Odro’s ease of access meant it was seen as particularly appropriate for mentoring, and for some it was better than other platforms. Some minor issues with functionality could potentially be addressed through additional training, but overall the training and support received from the project team and Odro meant issues were usually easily resolved.

4. Effectiveness of online mentoring

- 4.1. This chapter explores the features of the online approach to mentoring used in the pilot and how effectively these worked for mentees and mentors. We also reflect on participants' views of online methods in mentoring programmes more widely.

An unmet need

- 4.2. Participants and referral partners consistently agreed that the pilot's online delivery enhanced inclusivity and accessibility. It created opportunities for people to participate who might not have been able to engage with a face-to-face service. The pilot enhanced inclusivity by:
- Removing geographic barriers. Participation was not dependent on the proximity of mentors to mentees, or on the availability of transport giving people in remote and rural areas an equal opportunity to participate. A referral partner in the North East of Scotland mentioned how sparse service provision is there and how well received the online mentoring has been as a result.
 - With no travel requirement there were no transport costs. This removed a potentially significant barrier for people on low or unstable incomes. One mentee explained that budgeting for a return train fare would have been a worry each week.
 - Enabling participation from people who find it difficult to leave the house, such as those with mobility issues or anxiety. Several mentees experienced the latter and referral partners underlined this as a common issue among vulnerable veterans generally. For some the thought of travelling by public transport or meeting mentors in crowded places was highly stressful and may have discouraged participation.

“When I went out for counselling appointments, I used to build myself up to a tension and go ‘I’m not doing this’, so I’d literally get to where I’m going and go ‘right I’m cancelling’. Whereas this, it’s simpler, it’s made me more relaxed and it’s made my life a bit better. I know that every week when it’s happening with [mentor], I know the appointment is there, I don’t need to leave the house, I can come in, have a glass of water, I can relax, I don’t need to do anything fancy... it’s done.” [Mentee]

- 4.3. By providing online mentoring services to veterans in Scotland for the first time, the pilot programme fulfilled an important unmet need in reaching those less able to engage with face-to-face services.

Overcoming technology barriers

- 4.4. Access to technology was often cited as the main barrier to online mentoring. By providing tablets to mentees who did not have their own computer, the pilot addressed this material challenge.
- 4.5. Using new technology caused apprehension among some mentees. However, several found they picked things up more quickly than initially expected and, as mentioned previously, the efforts of the Senior Project Co-ordinator in setting up tablets and accounts helped considerably. This meant that people of all ages and abilities could participate.

“No it hasn’t [been a barrier], and I really thought it might. You know, because my generation, we didn’t grow up with computers, we didn’t even grow up with calculators. So it’s all kind of new, if you like. And so, it’s a bit daunting at times, not that I’m a stupid person, I’m just not used to technology... I did think it might be a barrier, because I’m more of a face-to-face person.” [Mentee]

“He’s the most patient person ever, he was fantastic! He just went with it, just because he was 84 doesn’t mean they can’t use technology if they have the help.” [Senior Project Co-ordinator]

No ‘one-size fits all’ approach

- 4.6. When comparing the benefits and drawbacks of different mentoring approaches, most participants ultimately concluded there is no ‘one size fits all approach.’ Overall, they agreed that the online approach taken in the pilot offered a number of benefits and supported its use for mentoring.

“It’s a wonderful thing actually, being able to get that close distance with someone on the video link without leaving your armchair. That’s the fascinating thing about it. It’s just as if you’re sitting in a room with them really. It’s the same thing. But you’re not.” [Mentee]

- 4.7. Others expressed a preference for meeting in person. One mentee who had a strong rapport with their mentor mentioned they would have enjoyed the sessions even more if they had been able to meet in person. It was also acknowledged that some mentees have a greater need for in-person support than others.

“I felt there was a bit of a barrier there. [Mentee] had issues that needed assistance I think... he got quite emotional a couple of times and I would’ve felt better being in the room rather than just being on the computer... if you are talking about difficult things and they get emotional, I do think that is a barrier.” [Mentor]

- 4.8. Online delivery has a role in any tailored approach, potentially using a mix of different engagement options, as best fits mentees’ needs. For some mentees starting online could help to ease any initial anxieties; over time they may feel comfortable building up to meeting in person. Others may feel better able to engage online after an initial in-person meeting. One mentor specifically highlighted the potential benefit of including telephone calls alongside video to overcome being tied to mentee’s homes:

“There’s maybe a benefit for him, talking when he goes out for a walk or something like that. His primary goal is about making sure he gets out the house a said amount to do exercise and things like that. It might be good to be out and about and have a conversation at the same time.” [Mentor]

- 4.9. Two pairs did not use Odro and reverted to telephone calls instead. In one instance this was because of a Wi-Fi connection issue which could not be resolved despite significant support from various parties. In the other instance the mentee stated they were not comfortable using a computer/tablet and would prefer telephone calls from the outset. This is discussed more in the next chapter. The fact that two pairs reverted to telephone mentoring suggests that while online mentoring increases inclusivity, it is not universally

preferred or accessible. Our evaluation indicates little more could have been done to enable these pairs to engage; unavoidably there will be some who are unable or unwilling to use technology. Fall-back options can therefore help to maximise participation. Telephone mentoring was more suitable for these mentees and led to a positive experience for them and their mentors.

Enhanced mentoring experience

- 4.10. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital delivery for mentoring. As Shoulder to Shoulder Online was already established in 2019, the programme was well placed to meet mentee's additional needs in the challenging circumstances. Lockdown restrictions made tackling isolation more of a priority, and goals set in the programme were adapted based on what was feasible within guidelines.
- 4.11. Online mentoring had many other benefits. The Senior Project Co-ordinator had considerable experience in veteran mentoring and was also a mentor in the online pilot. She observed how some mentees seemed to become comfortable speaking about themselves more quickly online.

“They are opening up quicker and saying more things initially in the first few sessions than if they were in a café.” [Senior Project Co-ordinator]

- 4.12. Mentees highlighted the benefit of being able to share their surroundings with their mentor, offering context to their discussions. Some talked of showing their projects to their mentors, like crafting or cooking. In one case a mentor was able to guide a mentee through setting up a new household appliance, which was one of their goals.

“One day I took my tablet to my day window and I showed her [mentor] a sheep pen which is quite close to my house and there must have been about a thousand sheep in it and we joked about that and I asked her to see if she could count the sheep to make a guess as to how many sheep were in the pen, she could do it at night before she goes to bed.” [Mentee]

- 4.13. Mentors also appreciated the ability to have a window into the lives of their mentees:

“It's helpful to be able to see him, I think it strengthens the connection and I guess the intimacy of that relationship. It allows him to show me things that he's done in the house that he's proud of and bring things to life, so I think that's excellent.” [Mentor]

The importance of effective matching

- 4.14. Another important benefit of online delivery is the scope for flexibility in matching mentees with mentors. With location removed as a barrier, matches can be based solely on the best fit for individuals – on shared interests or personalities - rather than on how easily matches can meet up.
- 4.15. Careful and considered matching was a vital aspect of the pilot programme's success. The Senior Project Co-ordinator considered the backgrounds, skills, interests and experiences of mentors to see where these aligned with mentees. Mentor's inductions and references were also reviewed. Finally, separate phone calls with mentors and mentees took place before matching.

- 4.16. Most mentees spoke of how well they ‘got on’ with their mentors. This appears to be hugely important to success in any pairing. If mentees feel they can be honest and open, without fear of judgement, they are more likely to reap the benefits of the programme.

“*I didn’t feel uncomfortable. Obviously I need to be open with her but I mean, me and [mentor] get on absolutely cracking.*” [Mentee]

- 4.17. Some pairs had things in common, whether that was creative writing, crafts, or life histories. When there was a shared interest or background, mentees reflected on this as instrumental to their perceptions of how well mentoring had gone.

“*When I first met [mentor], we had an instant recognition or link or familiarity. So, we got on great. And certainly, a lot depends on that link or relationship.*” [Mentee]

- 4.18. Matches did not always last; four ended prematurely for varied, personal reasons⁶. This is unsurprising and a relatively low drop off rate when one considers some of the challenging life circumstances that mentees in particular are experiencing.

- 4.19. Any change in mentor for a mentee needs to be handled delicately. In one instance a mentee felt that they would have preferred to take some time off the programme instead of being instantly matched with a new mentor, as this was a stressful time for them and having to begin with a new mentor felt overwhelming.

Maintaining a clear relationship

- 4.20. The majority of participants were aware of the need to maintain a clear mentor-mentee relationship. There was recognition of the need to avoid blurring the boundaries by contacting each other outside of the context of the sessions. Some mentors felt apprehensive about maintaining relationship boundaries at first, but for most there were no issues. Even where some pairs got on well and might have enjoyed meeting up socially there was a recognition on both sides that this may not be appropriate.

“*I was kind of worried about how I would strike a balance between being a mentor but going like, too personal. And to be honest, with [mentee] that’s not really been a challenge at all, I think he’s quite aware of the mentor-mentee relationship.*” [Mentor]

- 4.21. There were however boundary issues with a small number of participants highlighting the importance of processes for such eventualities.
- One mentee phoned their mentor over Christmas to discuss feeling suicidal. The mentor contacted the TimeBank team for advice and the situation was diffused.
 - A mentor occasionally received messages in the evening and did not reply as she understood the importance of maintaining a distance in her role.
 - Another mentee felt overwhelmed by the texts they initially received from their mentor. They knew the messages were good intentioned as the mentor was ‘just trying to get to know’ them, but felt unable to express their discomfort.

⁶ Reasons included family ill health, mentee’s own health, and difficulties rearranging sessions.

A careful balance between mentoring and befriending

- 4.22. While participants were generally aware of the parameters and requirements of a mentoring relationship, there were times when sessions resembled a befriending service. Establishing a friendly rapport was universally seen as a vital part of mentoring, providing the foundation for a supportive and trusting relationship from which goals could be achieved. However, some pairs experienced difficulties setting goals at times and found that ‘having a catchup’ dominated their sessions.
- 4.23. For some mentees social isolation was their biggest challenge and the weekly sessions helped address this issue; they had little interest in setting other goals. The lockdown context also contributed, exacerbating loneliness and limiting the types of goals that could be set. Despite their best efforts some mentors found their mentees did not have the motivation for goals which made it difficult to provide the intended mentoring.

“It’s her time, and if she wants to use that just to kind of offload, generally we just catch up about what she’s been doing during the week and how she’s feeling and what she’s been doing with her art. I try and direct towards the goals, to the plan that we have set, but realistically it just comes down to what she wants to talk about and what she wants to do.” [Mentor]

Flexible approach to goals

- 4.24. Examples of effective goal-setting underline the importance of a flexible approach. Based on their bond, one mentor confidently set his mentee new weekly goals. His mentee admitted that cooking new meals put him out of his comfort zone, but he enjoyed being pushed and sharing his experiences, good and bad, with his mentor.
- 4.25. Other mentors took more subtle approaches to goal setting. Aware that his mentee felt ‘wary about taking on goals’, one mentor suggested they focus on smaller tasks. This was well received and provided the mentee with a helpful platform to build towards larger goals. Another mentee spoke of how patronising goal-setting could have been, but that her mentor’s manner and approach effectively avoided this.

“She was just really good. I thought ‘goal-setting, do me a favour...please don’t tell me we’ll do this and we’ll do that.’ But it wasn’t like that. Not so much goal-setting but looking at things, positive aspects of my life and seeing where we could build on that.’ [Mentee]

- 4.26. These experiences underline the importance of a clear framework and guidelines in terms of what is expected from mentoring and a flexibility that permits mentors to tailor their approach, to suit the personalities, priorities and circumstances of their mentees.

Progress monitoring tools

- 4.27. The pilot used two tools to both support conversations between the mentor and mentee and capture progress against a range of measures. These tools – SWEMWEBS and Outcome Star - were generally praised as relevant and helpful. They allowed mentors to initiate conversations about mentees’ circumstances and objectives. They also assisted in steering sessions back towards goals if discussions went off on a tangent.⁷

⁷ Information about these tools is appended to this report. Changes in scores is provided in Chapter 5.

- 4.28. Most mentors encouraged mentees to use these tools to record their progress at set intervals, with mixed success. Some mentees felt a sense of satisfaction and motivation when the tools demonstrated progress. In contrast, one mentee was reluctant to engage with the tools because he had used them before to little effect.
- 4.29. There was also a sense that the tools may have been more appropriate if lockdown had not restricted the goals which mentees were able to set. One mentor was concerned his mentee was disappointed with his progress because his smaller goals did not align well with the outcomes on the star. Another reflected that a desire to please or fear of embarrassment could lead to inflated scores.

Frequency and duration

- 4.30. Mentoring sessions typically lasted an hour, though some pairs spent longer and others finished their calls after around 45 minutes. While there was some flexibility about duration, in several instances the Senior Project Co-ordinator had to regularly remind pairs not to over-run.
- 4.31. Some mentees said they would have liked longer sessions during lockdown, mostly to 'have a chat' as a result of their reduced social contact. This is understandable, given their contact with other support services may have been suspended or reduced. In this instance they found that one hour was not enough to both 'catch up' and discuss goals.

“We usually catch up on what each other has been making but since we have had to cut down to an hour we haven't had as long to really chat as much. It's more trying to concentrate more. On Friday because we were doing that spider gram thing, we didn't really have time to talk about 'how's your week been'.”
[Mentee]

- 4.32. Weekly sessions worked well for most pairs, but they appreciated being able to change the date or time of their sessions if needed. Being online meant pairs could be flexible too with minimal disruption, as opposed to the problems which would have been created cancelling a face-to-face meeting at the last minute. Most, however, tried to stick with set times, acknowledging how helpful the routine and structure was for mentees.
- 4.33. Some participants felt shorter and more frequent sessions might have been better initially, but observed that preferences that could be discussed at the outset rather than suggesting any changes to the core approach.

SUMMARY: Mentees, mentors and referral partners reported high levels of satisfaction with the online mentoring approach. While there are some small areas for improvement, it was generally felt to be appropriate and effective for those who participated. Online mentoring widened accessibility in a way that face-to-face programmes cannot. This was particularly the case during lockdown but participants agreed it would continue to be an important approach in the future.

5. The impact of online mentoring

- 5.1. This chapter sets out how being involved in Shoulder to Shoulder Online has impacted mentees. We consider how it has benefitted and supported them to achieve their goals and make positive life changes. Our findings are based on the experiences of mentees and observations of their mentors and referral partners.

Vital social interaction

- 5.2. A few matches were made before the Covid-19 pandemic, but many were established or ongoing during lockdown. It has always been important that using an online platform does not increase mentees' isolation. Events, however, mean that many are experiencing isolation, often with little support from other services.
- 5.3. The programme therefore became a vital source of connection during a time of limited social contact. Mentees shared that the most valuable element of the mentoring throughout lockdown was 'just having someone to talk to'. One of the referral partners explained just how important this social contact was:

“It's been really useful, especially at the moment where we've got a lot of clients who are shielding and are very, very isolated and the only form of contact they've had is with ourselves here. Adding the programme and being matched with somebody, they've found that really helpful. To be matched with somebody that's got some sort of shared interest with them they've found really nice because, as I say they're not having contact with anybody, so I think for a lot of them it's been a sort of life saver over the last six months.’ [Referral Partner]

- 5.4. As this quote underlines, the value of the social interactions derives from how well-matched the pairs were; both mentors and mentees repeatedly emphasised this point throughout our conversations. Shared interests and experiences helped to establish rapport and enabled interesting and enjoyable conversations to flow.
- 5.5. The programme was also a gateway to connecting with others during lockdown. Had one mentee not been part of the programme, they would not have been able to access the internet. They shared how critical this has been to maintain their mental health and own social network in a period of isolation.

“When lockdown happened, I never had any internet. The only form of outside communication I had was with my phone. Then through Erskine, they suggested I get in touch with [Senior Project Co-ordinator] to see about getting me set-up. That's where I got started, I got the tablet after that then got introduced to [mentor] and we've been having a good laugh... It's opened up my world completely. I'm used to playing PlayStation by myself but all of sudden I can speak to my mate and it sounds like he's sitting next to me. Having the internet has made a huge difference.” [Mentee]

Enabling mentees to 'open-up'

- 5.6. The social aspect of the sessions was key to unlocking wider benefits. 'Getting along' with mentors and enjoying their company helped establish a sense of trust and confidence in opening up without fear of judgement.

“I would say one of the biggest parts is being able to have someone to talk to who is not judgemental, in any way, and you feel like you can say anything and how you feel, that’s really, really important... And I’m a very private person, extremely private person, always have been, so for me to open up to someone, they’ve got to be pretty good. And I need to know that I can trust them.”
[Mentee]

“She has been good for me, the things that we’ve discussed and we went into depth about different things. Being perfectly honest with you I’m quite chuffed that I did get [mentor] as my mentor.” [Mentee]

- 5.7. For one mentee, this was the first time they felt able to talk about personal issues and could see that it could have a lasting effect on their ability to communicate in the future.

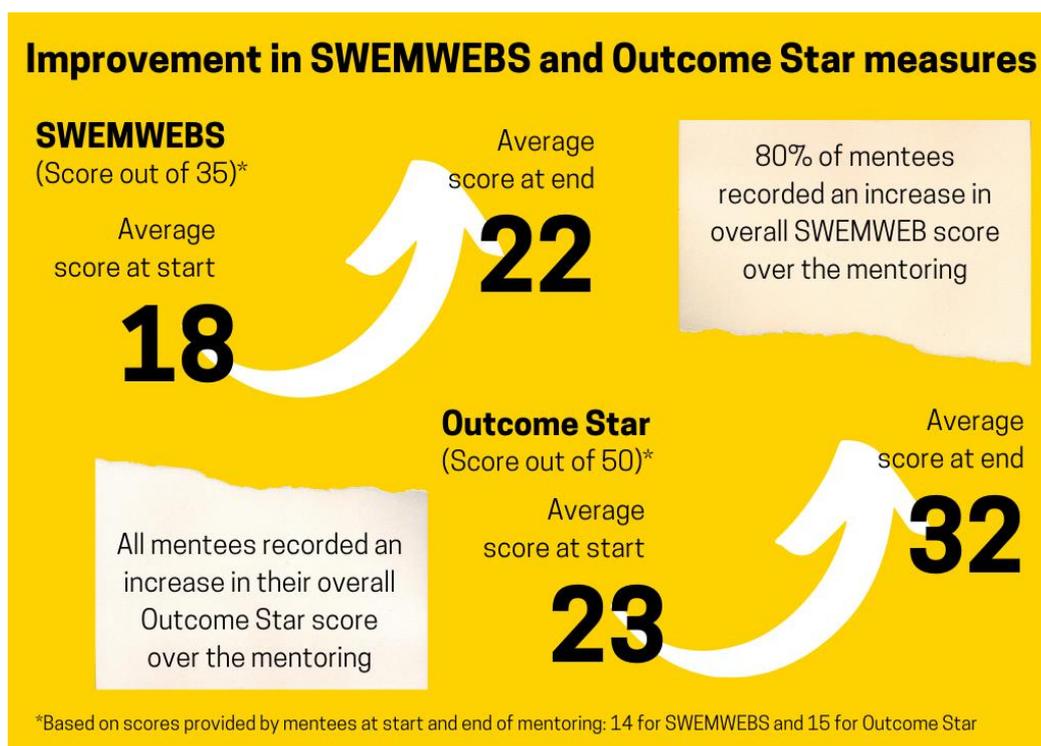
“I’m communicating a lot better than what I used to. I don’t clam up when he’s on... we tell stories. With my family I don’t open up, I keep things to myself. Which I don’t understand. It’s the stigma that goes with mental health - my dad’s old school, he thinks I should get a grip. I don’t like telling them my problems. I don’t want to worry them.” [Mentee]

- 5.8. Some mentees who enjoy group activities suggested there might be value in arranging optional social sessions with other mentees. Everybody who mentioned this acknowledged the importance of respecting privacy and boundaries by not discussing personal matters that they work through in their pairs. However, other mentees were very much against this and would not have felt comfortable if this was a core part of the programme.

Improved health and wellbeing

- 5.9. Enhanced emotional wellbeing was one of the main impacts mentioned by mentees and evidenced in the progress monitoring tools. Figure 5.1 shows the positive shifts recorded by mentees in the average scores for both measures over the course of mentoring.
- 5.10. The average SWEMWEBS score increased by 4 points, with 80% of participants recording an increase. The greatest single increase was 8 points. While this mentee participated in more sessions than average (21) there does not appear to be a link between number of sessions and increased scores.
- 5.11. Talking things over helped mentees to ‘get things off their chest’ and having a sympathetic ear went a long way to making mentees feel better about themselves and less isolated. Of the seven components of SWEMWEBS, the largest increases were in ‘feeling optimistic’ and ‘feeling close to others’.
- 5.12. The average Outcome Star score increased from 23 to 32 out of 50 over the course of mentoring. Increases were recorded across all five components, with the largest for ‘identity and self-esteem’ and ‘trust and hope’.

Figure 5.1: Improvement in monitoring measures



5.13. Guidelines for these tools emphasise that simply maintaining the baseline can be a noteworthy achievement. None of the mentee's wellbeing or outcome scores decreased over the pilot period. Given the severity and complexity of some of the issues experienced by many of the mentees in the programme, and the additional strain of lockdown, this is a noteworthy achievement.

5.14. Increased confidence and self-esteem were part of the improved sense of wellbeing experienced by mentees and observed by others.

“*I feel like I can see real benefits for [mentee], I think he looks forward to it and I think it gives him an opportunity to grow his self-esteem to talk about areas that he's confident in, to connect with the outside world and I think there's a lot of positivity within that for him, and he looks forward to it.*” [Mentor]

5.15. This was the case for one mentee after just three sessions.

“*But the three sessions I've had, they've been good and they've been positive, and they help to build your self-esteem, you know.*” [Mentee]

5.16. Health improvements also stemmed from goal-setting. Going out for more walks was a common goal set by mentees with their mentors, as something that could still be done within lockdown restrictions. Mentees mentioned how this helped them feel more connected to others because they would often bump into neighbours, giving them some much needed social interaction. Walking helped mentees to feel physically healthier; for one it reignited a past passion which led him to take on a bigger challenge of hiking sections of the North Coast 500 during the mentoring programme. Another mentee had stopped exercising after a health scare; his mentor helped him change his attitude to walking by showing him an app which he could use to listen to audiobooks on his phone. Walking while enjoying his books has now become a regular habit.

- 5.17. For some mentees the ramifications of their improved health and well-being was significant. Mentoring helped transform some mentee's frame of mind, moving them from a deeply unsettled place and instil a much more positive frame of mind. One referral partner noticed a dramatic change in one of their service users:

“He is in a much better position than he was, he was in such a dark place. Even just his general outlook, it's so much more positive. It has helped him reach a place where he can continue to build on.” [Referral Partner]

Knowledge and skills development

- 5.18. Several mentees benefitted from gaining new knowledge and learning new skills such as:

- Using a tablet and connecting with others via video call.
- Knowledge and skills from the activities their mentors have supported them with, such as better knowledge of history from reading books, and family history and art techniques from the classes they joined during the pilot.
- Accessing helpful resources such as the audiobooks mentioned above.
- Better understanding of specific health issues (one mentor was studying a subject related to the mentee's health issue) or approaches mentees can implement to improve their emotional wellbeing (mindfulness, walking etc).
- Appreciation of the different support services and networks available.

“[Mentor] has been terrific, I've learned a lot from her. And she's got me working again, reading. I'm a lazy learner so I listen to these audio books... That's all down to [mentor], getting me started to think about these things again... you're never too old are you?” [Mentee]

- 5.19. As well as gaining new knowledge and skills, some veterans gained renewed confidence in their existing abilities. One mentee mentioned how good they felt when their mentor listened to them talk about a topic they were passionate about and simply commented on how knowledgeable they were. This helped boost their self-esteem and demonstrate what they have to offer others.

- 5.20. Knowledge and skills gains were a consequence of effective matching and the training and support provided by the project team. The role the Senior Project Co-ordinator was vital in providing mentors with information on additional resources and services that might benefit mentees. Mentors recorded any queries or requests for support in the records they completed after each session and could approach the project team separately at any time. The response was always swift and helpful.

“All through our relationship, I've been trying to signpost him to things, and because I don't live in his area, it's been largely with [Senior Project Co-ordinator's] help. [She's] been great at feeding me suggestions for him. [She's] been terrific at providing information.” [Mentor]

A lasting impact

- 5.21. The evaluation has highlighted how the pilot has achieved several profound changes for mentees. This gives us a sense of the potential lasting impact of the programme. Our conversations with participants and referral partners underline how significant the project has been for all mentees, with some truly transformational effects for some.

“He is a completely different person now – from someone that struggled to leave the house he has built a social network and even has a girlfriend. If you had known him before he started mentoring you just wouldn’t think it would be possible to see him where he is now.” [Referral Partner]

- 5.22. Impacts are evident across several areas. These include:

- **Forging new connections** – several mentees are more confident in connecting with new people. One was able to set up a Facebook account which helped maintain a social connection with family and friends. Some are continuing to engage with groups their mentors encouraged them to join, and others have pro-actively joined new groups themselves. One mentee is now a regular attendee at an art class. Art was a previously a private, emotional outlet for anxiety, but is now a source of enjoyment with other veterans. Another mentee started to engage with their local community. Their mentor felt this stemmed from their work on small goals:

“Some of the largest impacts have been, in my opinion, his progression out into the community. When we started speaking one of his main goals was leaving the house more often, and he was quite isolated. He’d basically come back from a period of residential care, and was lacking in self-esteem and confidence... And over time he started to go out more into the community, exercise more, seeming to speak and engage with more people. I think part of that is based on having a regular conversation and something to get up for.” [Mentor]

- **Committing to a routine** – having to be ready for each video-call session and to progress goals brought a renewed structure to many mentees’ days. With the support of their mentor one mentee was able to change their attitude and approach to housework. This led them to regain custody of their dog and they have vowed to continue this new routine to ensure this remains the case.
- **Accessing new services** – The pilot programme has put some vulnerable veterans in touch with new services they would not otherwise have accessed. One mentee is now benefitting from a funded taxi to and from his local supermarket. Living in a rural area with limited finances, this has made a big difference to his life. Help like this was possible because of the session notes made by the mentor and the proactive efforts of the Senior Project Co-ordinator to respond.

“I think it was great, because [Senior Project Co-ordinator] knew a lot about the support available for veterans, that the veterans might not have been aware of, you know, so [Senior Project Co-ordinator] was able to help put things in place for them to help them out with stuff.” [Mentor]

- **Establishing new interests and re-igniting past passions** – several mentees were continuing to engage in activities their mentor encouraged them to try, and demonstrated a desire to carry on with them including walking, reading books, attending art classes, cooking and researching genealogy.
- **Volunteering, training and employment** – there was less evidence of mentees making progress with volunteering, training or employment. This may be partly a reflection of the constraints lockdown placed on the goals that could be set. The ability of a few mentees to make significant progress in this area is therefore significant. One mentee is considering becoming a mentor at the end of the pilot:

“You know, in the future, I really hope to assist as well. Sometimes thinking about it, there are maybe other people out there that need help as well.”
[Mentee]

Another secured a small cash-in hand job. Employment was a much longer-term goal for this mentee and so this achievement is a significant outcome. His mentor reflected on how momentous this was:

“I think one of the real highlights of our relationship is that at some point in August, he got to the stage where he started doing little bits of voluntary and almost cash-in-hand work... for him to do that, that was a huge thing... Listening to him speak about it, you could see the pride in what he's done.” [Mentor]

One mentee reflected on his move into employment just before lockdown:

“[The mentoring has] made me more comfortable speaking to new people. At work they ask if you have any disabilities and I tell them straight: ‘this is what I’ve got, this is what happens, this is what I’m doing’. As long as I’m getting the help that I need. It’s helped me relax into the job a wee bit more. And it lets people know me a bit better. So, it’s far easier.” [Mentee]

- **Transformed attitudes** – underlying each of these lasting impacts is a shift in attitude to a more positive ‘can-do’ mentality and willingness to try new things. Many mentees experienced some degree of a positive attitude change, although it has been larger for some than others.

“I’m at a point where I’m not going to say no all the time, I mean I’m not going to be a yes man, you know, but if it’s something that I’m not sure of, I’ll give it a go now, you know, whereas before I wouldn’t.” [Mentee]

SUMMARY: The pilot has impacted mentees in a number of important ways. For some the main benefit was to their health and wellbeing at a time of particular hardship, when there was a risk of this deteriorating further. The social connection provided by the mentoring has been vital in reducing isolation, and in helping mentees feel comfortable opening up to their mentors. For many the benefits went much further and evidence of positive, potentially lasting change is apparent. The pilot has helped to enhance mentees’ sense of confidence, introduced some stability and routine, and given them support to achieve their goals and improve their lives.

6. Additional insights

- 6.1. This chapter sets out additional insights from our conversations with mentees, mentors and referral partners. These are potentially valuable to any future delivery of online mentoring with veterans. This includes consideration of the benefits for others involved in the pilot, and feedback on other aspects of the delivery approach which have not already been covered in answering the core evaluation questions.

Benefits for mentors

- 6.2. Mentors highlighted positive impacts for themselves, as well as mentees. A key benefit was a sense of reward from helping somebody during a difficult time. This was also the main motivation for most mentors getting involved in the pilot.
- 6.3. Various other benefits were also mentioned. Most enjoyed getting to know their mentees and having interesting conversations with somebody new. Some felt their experience would directly benefit other aspects of their life. One mentor said her confidence had grown from seeing how much she had been able to assist her mentee.

“I’m not really that confident myself, so it’s been nice to see that I’m actually capable of helping someone else out and making a difference. And obviously it’s developing new skills that could be useful in further aspects of life and for like future work.” [Mentor]

- 6.4. Several mentees mentioned developing specific skills that would be relevant personally and professionally, such as listening and communication. One mentee felt she could apply her experience to mentoring schemes at work. The personal benefits were so significant for one mentor they felt they gained as much as their mentee.

“I feel as much as he gets mentoring, I feel like there’s this reverse mentoring as well. Because he is like an older person, so I feel like I get feedback and I get mentored as much as I’m helping him. So I feel like we’ve struck a really nice balance.” [Mentor]

Benefits for referral partners

- 6.5. This positivity was echoed in conversations with four referral partners. They felt the pilot was a valuable support mechanism which complemented their organisation’s existing services. The pilot’s cross-agency approach in identifying mentees and reaching potential mentors was praised in particular. As such, the project has sparked an appetite to continue to engage with TimeBank and signpost users to each other’s services.

A highly enjoyable experience

- 6.6. As well as the specific benefits for all involved, participants underlined how enjoyable their experience had been. All felt this type of online mentoring should be rolled out and made available on a regular basis. The mentors interviewed towards the end of the project spoke extremely highly of the pilot and indicated they would consider volunteering for similar schemes.

“*“Honestly it’s just been such a positive experience, and the project is really fantastic. I’m not sure of the status of it or if there’s anything pending about whether it will continue or not, but I guess I just wanted to add that I think it really definitely should continue, because I think it’s just really, it’s really valuable and I think as much as people who are being mentored get a lot out of it, also the people who are mentoring them get a lot out of it as well.” [Mentor]*

Mentor training

- 6.7. Mentors expressed high levels of satisfaction with the training delivered by TimeBank. Aside from some apprehensions about whether they would get along with their mentees on a personal level, mentors told us they felt well prepared, confident about what was expected from them and competent in using the various goal-setting and monitoring tools.
- 6.8. Suggestions for peer support were made by a handful of mentors and mentees. One improvement would be to provide mentors with opportunities to share best practice either verbally with each other or by creating a centralised resource database they have access to. Specifically sharing insights into the goals being set by other pairs might have helped to spark good ideas for other pairs who were struggling with what to do in the lockdown constraints. This would also allow them to get to know others performing the same role.

Project Support

- 6.9. There was consistent praise for the availability and support of the project team by mentees and mentors alike. Often this was specifically directed to the Senior Project Co-ordinator. All felt confident they would be supported if they encountered any issues, and those who experienced issues were satisfied with the assistance they received.

“*“Throughout the process I feel that I’ve been paid attention to and I’ve known that support was there, whether or not I needed it.” [Mentor]*

“*“Could you say to her [Senior Project Co-ordinator], how much I appreciated the work that she has done, and particularly in getting the right mentor for me. I’m sure she will have done that for many people because I think she did an incredible job and she’s an amazing lady.’ [Mentee]*

- 6.10. The significance of this input leads us to highlight the importance staff availability. During the pilot, the Senior Project Co-ordinator took an extended period of sick leave. At the same time the Project Administrator resigned due to a change in her circumstances. As a consequence, there was a period of time where mentees and mentors had more limited support. None of the participants we spoke with highlighted this a specific issue, but given how much they valued the support of the Senior Project Co-ordinator any gap in the availability of that support could affect the smooth running of future projects.

Achieving participation targets

- 6.11. As stated in chapter 2, a total of 23 pairs were matched in the pilot compared to a target of 30. Several factors contributed to the number of matches being lower than anticipated. The Senior Project Co-ordinator worked hard at the start of the project to build relationships with referral partners and create momentum in the volunteer recruitment campaign, but this took longer than expected. The absence of project staff in the middle of the pilot also delayed new matches being formed. While all involved are satisfied with the engagement achieved by the pilot, these challenges are worth noting.

Clarity over project end date

- 6.12. Initially for some mentees there seemed to be a misunderstanding or misconception about the duration of support they were to receive. Despite the best efforts of the team to explain it was a time-limited service, a small number of participants expected a longer-term relationship with their mentor.
- 6.13. While all acknowledged that the mentoring would come to an end, it emerged from our conversations that there was a lack of clarity among mentees regarding when this would happen. There was an uncertainty as to whether this would be after a set amount of sessions, a set amount of time or if the weekly sessions could continue until the project funding ended.
- 6.14. On the one hand they appreciated the flexibility offered by the pilot in allowing things to continue if both in the pair were able and keen to do so. However, mentors and mentees mentioned they would have liked greater clarity on the options, and specifically how much time was left as they were nearing the end of the project. Mentors were aware that mentees could feel disappointed and upset if the project came to a sudden end which in some cases could set their progress back. One mentee did prematurely bring their sessions to a close because of the uncertainty as to when they would officially end. This was an isolated case; most mentors and mentees felt content about the end but would have preferred more time to prepare.
- 6.15. Some mentors also would have liked a better understanding of the 'next steps' available to their mentees. For example, one mentor had hoped there might be a chance for their mentee to eventually become a mentor themselves and would have liked to have been able to discuss these options in the closing sessions.
- 6.16. Mentors did acknowledge that, on reflection, they could have pro-actively approached the Senior Project Co-ordinator for clarity on both these matters.

SUMMARY: The pilot has also benefitted volunteer mentors and referral partners. Mentors have felt a sense of satisfaction and increased confidence from supporting their mentees and have gained valuable skills and knowledge. Referral partners have found an additional support mechanism they can signpost their veterans to. The support provided by the pilot team was recognised, appreciated and vital to the success of the pilot. Despite the best efforts of the Senior Project Co-ordinator, mentors and mentees would have benefitted from greater clarity over when their mentoring would end.

7. Future considerations



"Brilliant. It's been a lot of support to be fair... You know, it's given me all the help that I need." [Mentee]

- 7.1. There is clear, positive evidence that Shoulder to Shoulder Online has achieved both its objectives: the technology used is fit for purpose and the online mentoring has supported mentees to achieve positive change and had a significant impact on their lives and wellbeing. Mentors have also benefitted, and referral partners have identified organisational gains in terms of service provision and enhanced ways of working.
- 7.2. There is widespread support for rolling out the approach used in this pilot. Crucially, this was perceived as having the potential to increase engagement with services and making veteran support services more accessible and inclusive. This has been particularly true during lockdown when much face-to-face support from specialist support agencies was withdrawn.
- 7.3. The points below set out suggestions which should be considered by organisations seeking to run a similar programme in the future:
 - **Provision of devices:** Loaning tablets to participants who did not have the technology to access Odro at home was vital to ensuring inclusivity. The need to include and budget for these in a scaled-up project is essential.
 - **Allocating adequate time for device set-up:** A significant investment of time was made in learning how to run the programme effectively, particularly in setting up, distributing and training participants in how to use the technology. The streamlining of this process after the trial period made accessing Odro much easier for mentees. It is important that any future roll-out allocates adequate time to this set-up process.
Linked to this, having a range of instructions and support for participants would be beneficial. Some may be comfortable with more technical instructions; others might benefit from simpler, or even picture style, guidance on how to use their tablets. Demonstrating how Odro functions on different devices would also be helpful.
 - **Ensuring the most efficient use of the Senior Project Co-ordinator's time and skills:** Effective matching was cited by mentors and mentees as the main success factor for the online mentoring. The ongoing support provided by the project team, specifically the Senior Project Co-ordinator, was also highly valued and vital for putting mentees in touch with other support services. It is therefore important to ensure that the Senior Project Co-ordinator can focus on such critical tasks. The recruitment of a Project Administrator was very helpful in enabling this and would be an important role in a similar project. Consideration could also be given to whether dedicated IT support is required to assist mentors and mentees with the technology.
 - **Taking care when changing matches:** If a match needs to change, it is important to have conversations with the mentee around their feelings about a new mentor. Having invested in one relationship, it may prove daunting to start again. A short pause may be useful, depending on their circumstances.

- **Boundary setting:** Clearly communicating the parameters of the mentoring relationship is important for establishing boundaries and maintaining effective partnerships between the pairs. Instances where these boundaries become blurred appear to be rare, but having guidelines in place to avoid this is important.
- **A clear focus on mentoring:** Many mentees want to chat; this helps build their relationship with their mentor and for most it is what makes their involvement a positive and fun experience. However, some chat took place at the expense of goal-setting. A balance is important, but those entering into online mentoring like this – both mentees and mentors - should be clear on its aims and that it is time-limited and goals-based.
- **Flexible approaches to goal-setting:** Having a flexibility around the core programme structure and a clearly communicated mentoring framework allows mentors to tailor the approach to goal-setting to best suit the personalities, priorities and circumstances of their mentee. This in turn maximises engagement and results. Explaining this in training and providing examples of goals set by others in the project might help some mentors form the best approach for their mentee.
- **Additional training and support:** Demonstrating how to screen-share with Odoo – or ensuring the correct settings are in place - is an addition which could be made to the mentors' training. Consideration could also be given to whether training could be shorter for those who are experienced with video platforms. Mentors could also benefit from the creation of a centralised resource database with useful information and links; adding to this as they go along would create an ever-growing resource for future programmes. Consideration could also be given to offering mentors the opportunity to meet on a more social basis.
- **A positive ending:** Some participants find it hard to come to the end of their support. While it was regularly made clear that the mentoring was for a fixed time, some participants failed to acknowledge this or were unclear about specifically when it would come to an end. Ensuring that both mentors and mentees have an understanding of how long the mentoring lasts and of next steps available to mentees will help pairs work towards a positive ending. Providing resources to help prepare for this could be helpful.

Appendix 1: Methodology

- i. Researchers at The Lines Between interviewed mentors, mentees, project staff and referral partners at various stages of the pilot, between September 2019 and November 2020.
- ii. In total, 45 conversations took place with 32 individuals:
 - A short trial was conducted in summer 2019 before the full pilot began. We spoke to seven trial participants (3 mentees and 4 mentors) in September 2019 to gather feedback on their experiences of the trial.
 - We spoke to 14 mentees and 13 mentors as their pairings came to an end, between March 2020 and November 2020.
 - Three follow-up conversations were also conducted in November 2020 with 2 mentors and 1 mentee whose mentoring finished earlier in the pilot.
 - Also included are conversations with 3 referral partners and three conversations from different points in the pilot with the Senior Project Co-ordinator, reflecting on both her role and her experiences as a mentor herself.
- iii. Given their familiarity, many of the conversations took place on the Odro platform; the remainder were conducted on the telephone. Mentors and mentees were usually approached by the research team by text message in the first instance, to introduce themselves and arrange a time to speak.
- iv. We also analysed secondary information including participant profile data, case notes and outcome measurements to evaluate how far the pilot online mentoring programme achieved the stated objectives.

Appendix 2: SWEMWEBS and Outcome Star

- i. The pilot team used two tools with the dual purpose of supporting conversations between the mentor and mentee, whilst also capturing progress against a range of measures.
- ii. The **Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWEBS)**, is a short version of the full Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, using seven of the 14 statements relating to mental wellbeing from the full version.
 - Against each statement, participants choose from five response options ranging from 'none of the time' through to 'all of the time'. Each response option has a numerical value which is used to calculate a total score out of 35.
 - Participants completed SWEMWEBS twice over the course of their participation, once at the beginning to establish a baseline and again at the end.
 - 15 participants completed SWEMWEBS at both intervals.
- iii. The **Outcome Star** is used to measure how a mentee feels about their current situation. The star gives a good indication of a mentee's happiness and what things can be worked on. Mentors can also use it to show the progression the mentee has made to achieve their goals
- iv. Mentees' provided scores on a scale of 1 to 10 against five different outcome categories:
 - Identity and self esteem
 - Trust and hope
 - Volunteering, training and employment
 - Social networks
 - Wellbeing
- v. The Outcome Star was administered when participants started the programme, at the mid-point and then again at the end of their participation. In total, 14 participants completed the outcome star at the 3 intervals.