



How to talk to funders about: 1-1 mentoring impact

The 1-1 Mentoring Toolkit

1. Introduction

This guide explains how small charities and mentoring organisations can describe their impact clearly and consistently in funding applications. It focuses on the types of questions funders commonly ask about outcomes, evidence, and change, and shows how mentoring organisations can respond using structured outcome frameworks, monitoring data, and evaluation evidence.

The guide is intended for small charities, delivery managers, and bid writers who need to explain what difference their work makes and provides practical examples of how to describe outcomes, how to distinguish outputs from impact, and how to present monitoring and evaluation evidence in a way that matches funder expectations.

In funding contexts, 'talking about impact' means explaining the areas of change your work supports, how those changes are produced through your delivery model, and what evidence you will return to the funder to demonstrate progress. Rather than listing activities, organisations are expected to describe outcome areas such as relationships, wellbeing, decision making, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, and reductions in risk-related behaviour, and to show how these changes are measured through surveys, monitoring data, mentor observation, and participant reflection over time.

2. How to Use This Guide

This section explains how the guide is structured and how the sections that follow should be used.

The guide is organised around common areas where funding applications ask organisations to describe their impact. Instead of presenting impact as a single statement, the guide separates these areas so that organisations can respond clearly to different types of impact-related questions across an application form. Each section that follows begins with one or more typical funder questions in a particular area. These questions are included to show where the guidance applies within funding applications. Each section then presents a short funder scenario explaining what the funder is likely to be asking for in practice, including what information is relevant to include and what information is not required at that stage of the application. Sections conclude with example wording showing how organisations can describe their outcomes, monitoring approaches, or evidence of effectiveness in a way that matches funder expectations.

This guide is intended to offer a structured way to prepare responses across the main areas where funders request impact information. This allows organisations to develop consistent outcome descriptions and evidence statements that can be adapted across multiple funding applications rather than written separately each time.

3. Understanding Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

Relevant funder questions addressed in this section:

- *What difference will your project make?*
- *What difference do your services make for the people you support?*
- *Describe the impact you expect to make with individuals and communities and the difference your work will make to them.*

Funder Scenario: Explaining the Difference Your Project Makes

This asks grantees to describe what changes for young people as a result of mentoring and what outcome information the funder will receive back as part of the data return. Applicants therefore need to describe change across outcome areas such as relationships, wellbeing, decision making, self-regulation, planning ahead, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, and community connection, and indicate that progress in these areas will be reported through surveys, session-level indicators, mentor observation, and young person reflection.

Grantees should therefore:

- describe the difference mentoring is expected to make within specific outcome areas rather than listing delivery activity (*'mentoring will support measurable improvement across outcome areas such as relationships, wellbeing, decision making, and self-regulation'*)

- distinguish clearly between programme outputs (for example number of sessions delivered) and outcomes measured through the mentoring framework (*'mentoring will return data showing change through surveys rather than basic outputs such as sessions delivered'*)
- explain how change takes place through the mentoring relationship over time (*'mentoring will support change through sustained one-to-one mentoring relationships over time'*)
- indicate where wider indicators such as attendance, exclusions, or justice-system contact are interpreted alongside mentoring progress rather than attributed directly to mentoring (*'mentoring will contribute to wider changes and be reported alongside mentoring delivery data to show how progress in mentoring outcome areas relates to wider changes over time'*)
- describe the data that will be returned to the funder through baseline and follow-up mentoring surveys, session-level indicator tracking, mentor observation, and young person reflection (*'mentoring will return data showing change through surveys, indicator tracking, mentor observation, and participant reflection'*)

Template answer: Explaining the Difference Your Project Makes

Through one-to-one mentoring, the project supports measurable change for young people across key outcome areas including relationships, wellbeing, decision making, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, and community connection. Mentoring provides a consistent adult relationship through which young people strengthen trusted adult connections, improve emotional regulation, increase confidence in making decisions, and take clearer steps towards learning and progression goals.

The difference this project makes will be reported to the funder through a structured mentoring data return over the course of delivery. This includes baseline and follow-up mentoring surveys measuring change across the outcome areas, session-level indicator tracking showing progress in areas such as goal setting, reflection, and relationship development, and mentor observation and young person reflection explaining how change develops during engagement. Together these provide consistent evidence of change across participants.

Where available, wider indicators such as attendance, exclusions, youth justice involvement, or participation in education and training pathways will be reported alongside mentoring delivery data to show how progress in mentoring outcome areas relates to wider changes in stability and engagement over time.

4. Using Outcomes in Funding Proposals

Relevant funder questions addressed in this section:

- *What changes do you expect for the young people you support?*
- *What impact do you expect the grant to have?*
- *What outcomes do you expect the project to achieve?*

Questions like these ask applicants to describe the main differences they expect the proposed mentoring to make for young people and how those differences relate to the priorities of the funding programme.

They are concerned with intended areas of change rather than delivery activity, satisfaction measures, or counts of sessions provided.

Funder Scenario: Identifying Outcomes in Funding Applications

In practice, this means identifying the outcome domains where mentoring is expected to support progress and explaining why those areas are appropriate to the needs of the young people being supported. Using the mentoring outcomes framework, organisations can describe expected change across areas such as relationships, wellbeing, decision making, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, and community connection. These domains describe developmental change rather than service delivery.

Applicants should also indicate what progress within these outcome areas is expected to look like in practice by referring to indicators such as identifying trusted adults, reflecting on consequences before acting, planning next steps towards goals, improving emotional regulation, strengthening participation in education or training pathways, or developing confidence in decision making. These indicators help show what change will look like if mentoring is working as intended.

Funders are not asking here for evidence of previous performance, satisfaction feedback, or monitoring data on outputs such as numbers of sessions delivered. Instead, they are asking applicants to describe what will change for young people and why those changes are expected to occur through sustained one-to-one mentoring relationships over time. In one-to-one mentoring, change typically develops through a sequence in which relational trust supports engagement, engagement supports reflection, and reflection supports shifts in decision making, behaviour, and participation. Describing this process shows how the proposed outcomes follow from the mechanisms through which mentoring operates.

Template Answer: Describing outcomes in a funding proposal

We support young people to address challenges in their lives through a one-to-one mentoring model that supports them to change in eight areas: relationships, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, wellbeing, decision making, and community connection.

Our mentoring model supports young people to build relationships with an adult (often for the first time) that they can trust is on their side, and through this supports them to reflect on things like behaviour and consequences before acting, improving emotional regulation, planning next steps towards education or employment goals, strengthening confidence in decision making, and increasing participation in positive peer and community contexts. Together, these describe the forms of change the project is designed to support during engagement.

Our mentoring does not expect immediate results, but change over time. Outcomes are expected to develop through an interactive or two-way mentoring relationship that typically progresses from practical engagement and trust-building towards reflective discussion, goal setting, and independent decision making over time. As the mentoring relationship stabilises, young people increasingly use sessions as a space to interpret experiences differently, plan future steps, and act on agreed goals, supporting progress across the outcome areas identified above.

5. Explaining How You Measure Change

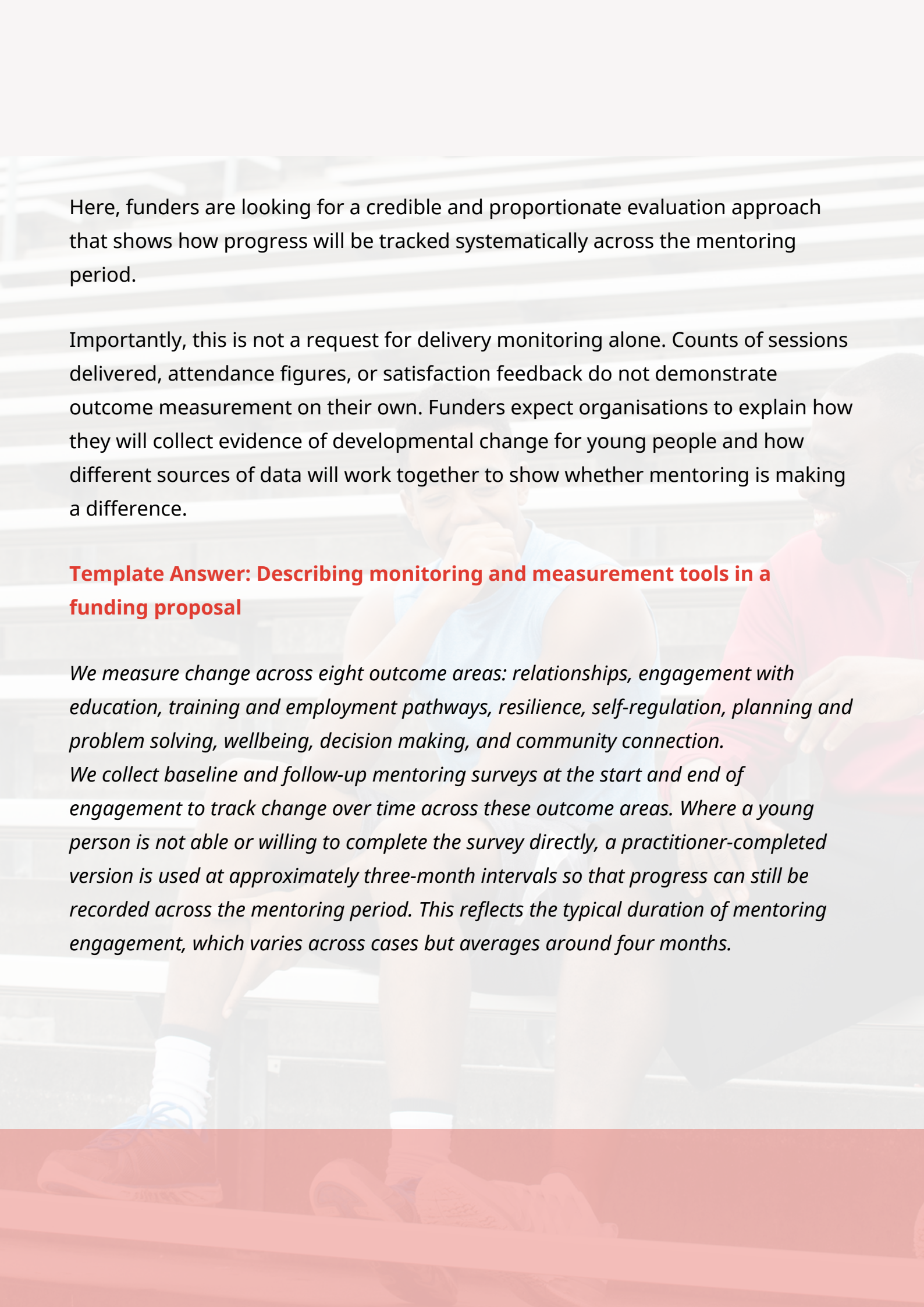
Relevant funder questions addressed in this section:

- *How do you monitor and evaluate the work that you are delivering?*
- *How are outcomes measured?*
- *How will you measure the success of the project or service?*

Funder Scenario: Explaining Monitoring and Measurement Approaches

Questions like these ask applicants to explain how they will measure change during delivery and what tools they will use to generate outcome evidence for the funder. Funders expect organisations to describe a clear monitoring approach that links outcomes to indicators and indicators to data collection methods. This normally involves baseline and follow-up outcome surveys, session-level indicator tracking, mentor observation, and structured reflection with young people (for instance, through interviews). If young people are less able or willing to engage then anonymised case data can be analysed to show the journey young people take through your mentoring programme.

Funders are also asking about methodology, not just tools. In most mentoring programmes this means a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative methods such as surveys with qualitative approaches that use interviews, focus groups, or more informal reflection sessions. When reported together, the combined data shows change over time with qualitative evidence explaining how that change develops through the mentoring relationship.



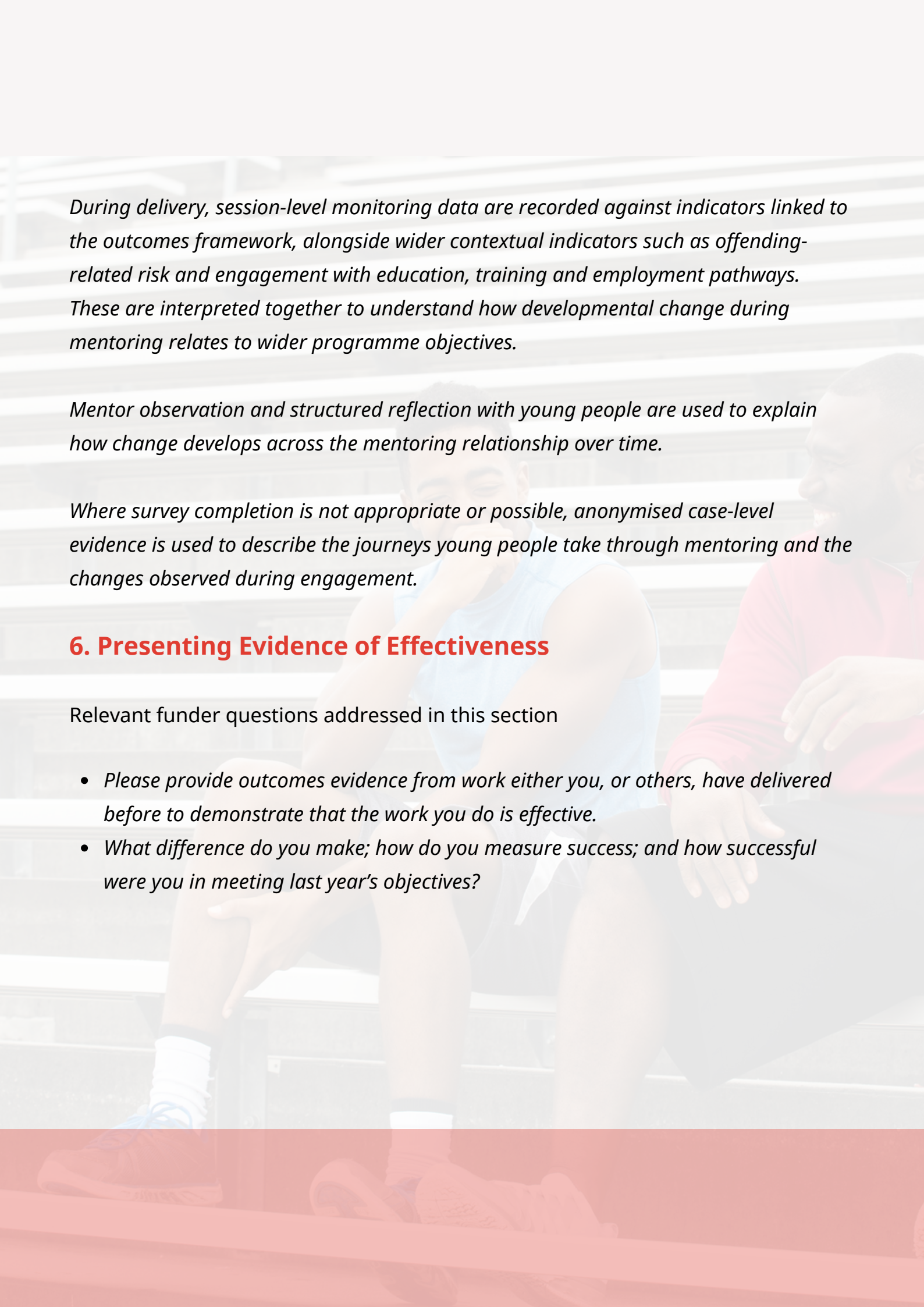
Here, funders are looking for a credible and proportionate evaluation approach that shows how progress will be tracked systematically across the mentoring period.

Importantly, this is not a request for delivery monitoring alone. Counts of sessions delivered, attendance figures, or satisfaction feedback do not demonstrate outcome measurement on their own. Funders expect organisations to explain how they will collect evidence of developmental change for young people and how different sources of data will work together to show whether mentoring is making a difference.

Template Answer: Describing monitoring and measurement tools in a funding proposal

We measure change across eight outcome areas: relationships, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, wellbeing, decision making, and community connection.

We collect baseline and follow-up mentoring surveys at the start and end of engagement to track change over time across these outcome areas. Where a young person is not able or willing to complete the survey directly, a practitioner-completed version is used at approximately three-month intervals so that progress can still be recorded across the mentoring period. This reflects the typical duration of mentoring engagement, which varies across cases but averages around four months.



During delivery, session-level monitoring data are recorded against indicators linked to the outcomes framework, alongside wider contextual indicators such as offending-related risk and engagement with education, training and employment pathways. These are interpreted together to understand how developmental change during mentoring relates to wider programme objectives.

Mentor observation and structured reflection with young people are used to explain how change develops across the mentoring relationship over time.

Where survey completion is not appropriate or possible, anonymised case-level evidence is used to describe the journeys young people take through mentoring and the changes observed during engagement.

6. Presenting Evidence of Effectiveness

Relevant funder questions addressed in this section

- *Please provide outcomes evidence from work either you, or others, have delivered before to demonstrate that the work you do is effective.*
- *What difference do you make; how do you measure success; and how successful were you in meeting last year's objectives?*

Funder Scenario: Demonstrating Evidence from Previous Delivery

Questions like these ask applicants to present evidence from previous delivery showing what difference their mentoring has already made for young people. Funders expect organisations to describe outcome-level change using results from earlier monitoring or evaluation activity, typically drawn from baseline and follow-up surveys, indicator tracking across outcome areas, mentor observation, and structured feedback from participants.

In most mentoring programmes cohort sizes are relatively small and engagement varies across participants, so funders do not normally expect formal statistical testing. Instead, they expect clear descriptive evidence showing proportions or percentages of participants improving across outcome areas such as relationships, wellbeing, decision making, self-regulation, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, and community connection.

Where previous evaluation cycles do not yet exist, organisations should still present structured evidence showing how change develops in practice. This can include indicator-level monitoring data, anonymised summaries of mentoring journeys across multiple participants, or repeated patterns observed across cases. These forms of evidence demonstrate emerging effectiveness while programmes are still building a longer-term evidence base.

Individual case studies on their own are usually not sufficient to demonstrate effectiveness, because they describe isolated examples rather than patterns of change across participants.

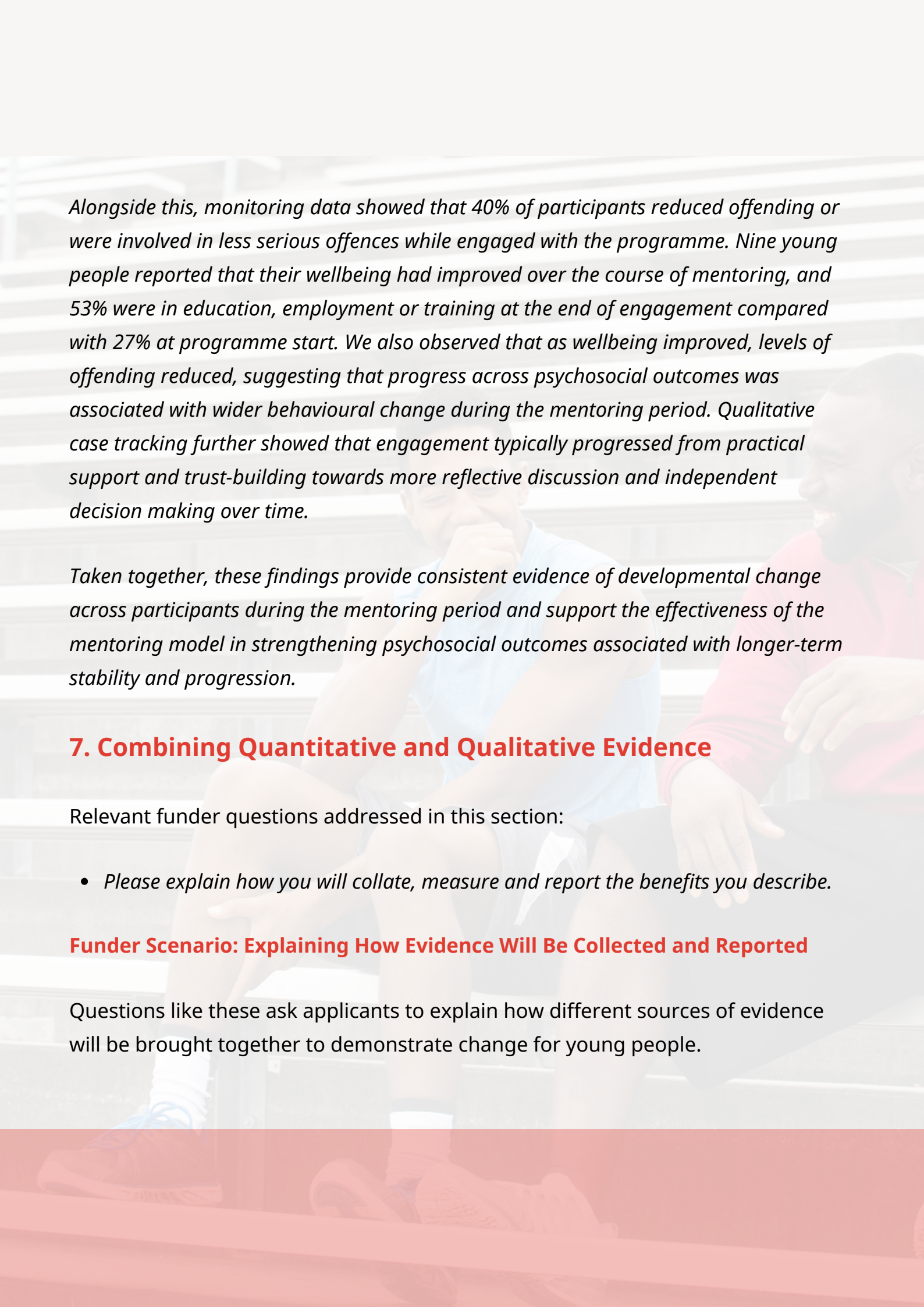


This is also a practical issue in funding applications where response limits are often short (for example 200–250 words), making it difficult to present enough detail from a single case to demonstrate programme-level impact. Funders are therefore looking for concise summaries of change across groups of participants rather than standalone stories.

Template Answer: Presenting evidence from previous delivery

Our most recent evaluation showed that all 15 young people participating in one-to-one mentoring demonstrated improvement in at least one of the key outcome areas we measure impact against, including relationships with trusted adults, emotional regulation, decision making, and engagement with education, training and employment pathways. Average wellbeing scores increased from 3.1 at baseline to 4.8 at follow-up (a 55% increase), while 73% of participants reported greater confidence in managing difficult situations and 67% identified clearer next steps towards education or training by the end of mentoring.

Baseline and follow-up surveys also showed that 80% of participants reported improved ability to reflect on consequences before acting, and 60% identified at least one additional trusted adult they could approach for support by the end of engagement.



Alongside this, monitoring data showed that 40% of participants reduced offending or were involved in less serious offences while engaged with the programme. Nine young people reported that their wellbeing had improved over the course of mentoring, and 53% were in education, employment or training at the end of engagement compared with 27% at programme start. We also observed that as wellbeing improved, levels of offending reduced, suggesting that progress across psychosocial outcomes was associated with wider behavioural change during the mentoring period. Qualitative case tracking further showed that engagement typically progressed from practical support and trust-building towards more reflective discussion and independent decision making over time.

Taken together, these findings provide consistent evidence of developmental change across participants during the mentoring period and support the effectiveness of the mentoring model in strengthening psychosocial outcomes associated with longer-term stability and progression.

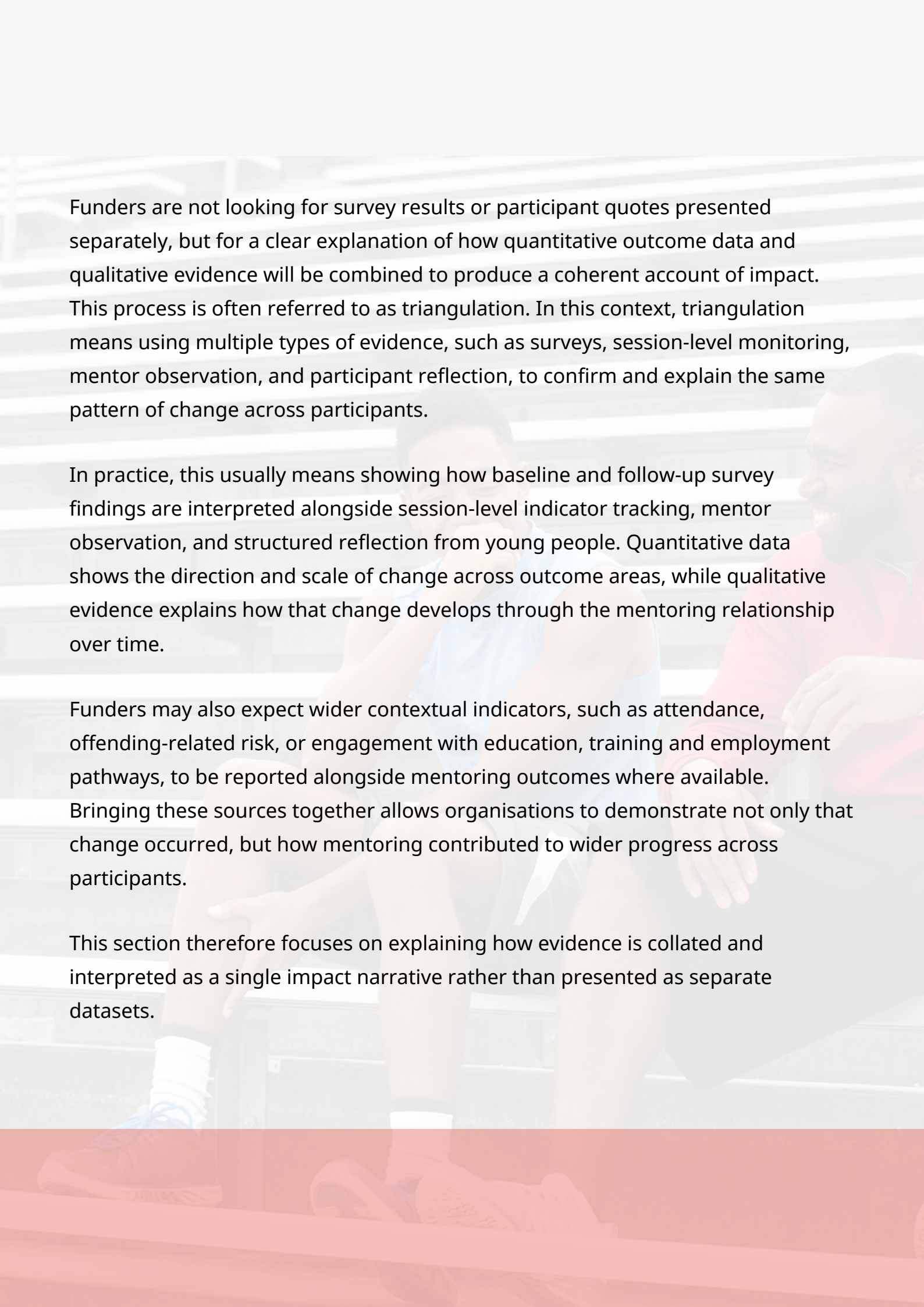
7. Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

Relevant funder questions addressed in this section:

- *Please explain how you will collate, measure and report the benefits you describe.*

Funder Scenario: Explaining How Evidence Will Be Collected and Reported

Questions like these ask applicants to explain how different sources of evidence will be brought together to demonstrate change for young people.



Funders are not looking for survey results or participant quotes presented separately, but for a clear explanation of how quantitative outcome data and qualitative evidence will be combined to produce a coherent account of impact. This process is often referred to as triangulation. In this context, triangulation means using multiple types of evidence, such as surveys, session-level monitoring, mentor observation, and participant reflection, to confirm and explain the same pattern of change across participants.

In practice, this usually means showing how baseline and follow-up survey findings are interpreted alongside session-level indicator tracking, mentor observation, and structured reflection from young people. Quantitative data shows the direction and scale of change across outcome areas, while qualitative evidence explains how that change develops through the mentoring relationship over time.

Funders may also expect wider contextual indicators, such as attendance, offending-related risk, or engagement with education, training and employment pathways, to be reported alongside mentoring outcomes where available. Bringing these sources together allows organisations to demonstrate not only that change occurred, but how mentoring contributed to wider progress across participants.

This section therefore focuses on explaining how evidence is collated and interpreted as a single impact narrative rather than presented as separate datasets.

Template Answer: Explaining how different sources of evidence are combined to report impact

Our evaluations combine baseline and follow-up outcome surveys with monitoring data collected across the mentoring period and structured reflection from young people to produce a single account of developmental change across participants. Survey data identifies movement across outcome areas such as relationships, emotional regulation, decision making, and engagement with education, training and employment pathways, while monitoring data is used alongside participant reflection to interpret how those changes develop through the mentoring relationship over time.

In our most recent evaluation, these sources were brought together to examine change across a cohort of young people participating in one-to-one mentoring. Survey findings were interpreted alongside monitoring data tracking wellbeing, offending-related risk, and engagement with education, training and employment pathways, with participant reflection used to explain how mentoring supported shifts in confidence, behaviour, and future planning during engagement.

This enabled us to show that mentoring supported consistent developmental progress across psychosocial outcome areas linked to longer-term stability, including stronger relationships with trusted adults, improved confidence managing difficult situations, clearer next steps towards education and training pathways, and increased ability to reflect on behaviour and consequences before acting. Taken together, these sources provided a single evidence base describing how change developed across participants rather than presenting survey findings and monitoring data separately.

8. Explaining Scale and Reach

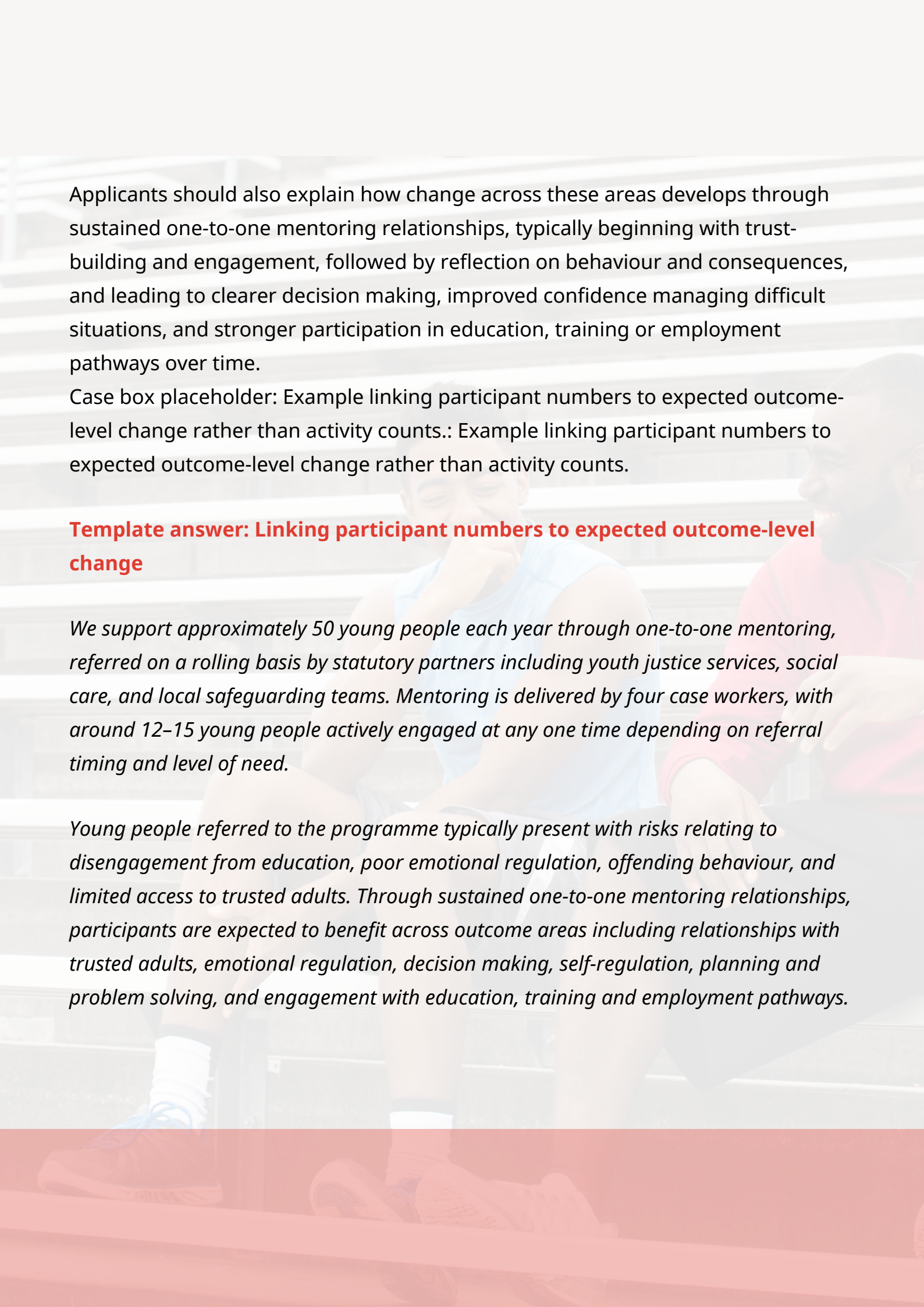
Relevant funder questions addressed in this section:

- *How many people are expected to benefit from the project or service? How will they benefit?*

Funder Scenario: Explaining Scale and Reach

Questions like these ask applicants first to explain how many young people are expected to benefit from mentoring and then to describe the areas in which those participants are expected to experience change and how that change is expected to occur. Funders are not asking for activity counts such as the number of sessions delivered. Instead, they are asking organisations to link participant numbers to expected progress across outcome areas and to explain the mechanisms through which mentoring produces that progress.

In practice, this means stating how many young people are expected to be referred to the programme over the course of the year and how many are typically engaged at any one time. Applicants should then describe the outcome areas in which participants are expected to benefit, such as relationships with trusted adults, emotional regulation, decision making, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, and community connection.



Applicants should also explain how change across these areas develops through sustained one-to-one mentoring relationships, typically beginning with trust-building and engagement, followed by reflection on behaviour and consequences, and leading to clearer decision making, improved confidence managing difficult situations, and stronger participation in education, training or employment pathways over time.

Case box placeholder: Example linking participant numbers to expected outcome-level change rather than activity counts.: Example linking participant numbers to expected outcome-level change rather than activity counts.

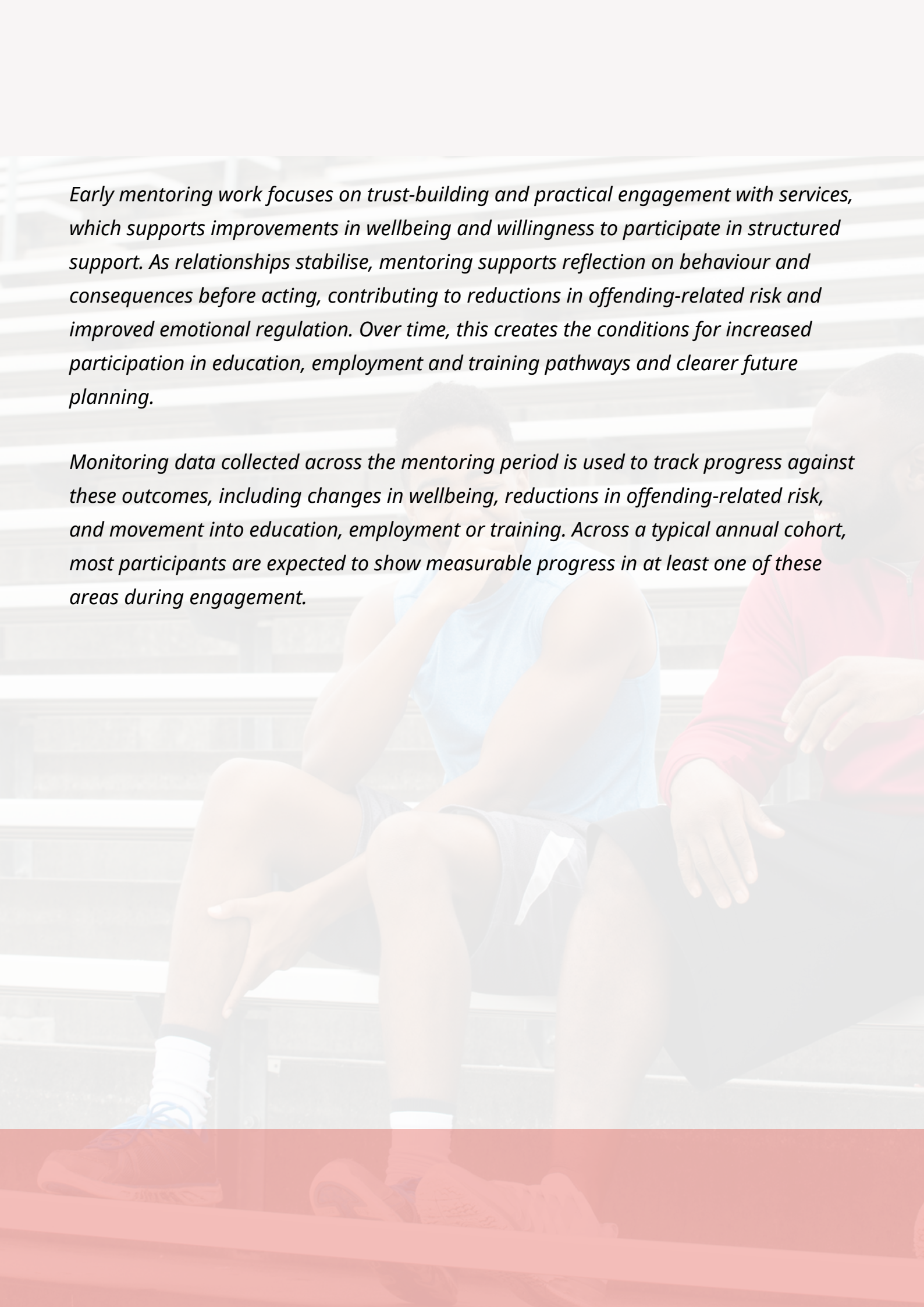
Template answer: Linking participant numbers to expected outcome-level change

We support approximately 50 young people each year through one-to-one mentoring, referred on a rolling basis by statutory partners including youth justice services, social care, and local safeguarding teams. Mentoring is delivered by four case workers, with around 12–15 young people actively engaged at any one time depending on referral timing and level of need.

Young people referred to the programme typically present with risks relating to disengagement from education, poor emotional regulation, offending behaviour, and limited access to trusted adults. Through sustained one-to-one mentoring relationships, participants are expected to benefit across outcome areas including relationships with trusted adults, emotional regulation, decision making, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, and engagement with education, training and employment pathways.

Early mentoring work focuses on trust-building and practical engagement with services, which supports improvements in wellbeing and willingness to participate in structured support. As relationships stabilise, mentoring supports reflection on behaviour and consequences before acting, contributing to reductions in offending-related risk and improved emotional regulation. Over time, this creates the conditions for increased participation in education, employment and training pathways and clearer future planning.

Monitoring data collected across the mentoring period is used to track progress against these outcomes, including changes in wellbeing, reductions in offending-related risk, and movement into education, employment or training. Across a typical annual cohort, most participants are expected to show measurable progress in at least one of these areas during engagement.



Appendix 1 - Checklist: Are You Ready to Evidence Impact in a Bid?

1. **Outcome areas defined:** Do you have a mentoring outcomes framework that clearly sets out the areas of change your work supports? This toolkit provides a structured framework covering relationships, emotional regulation, decision making, self-regulation, planning and problem solving, engagement with education, training and employment pathways, resilience, and community connection. The framework has been developed from practice-based mentoring evidence and is designed to reflect the mechanisms through which sustained one-to-one mentoring produces change over time.
2. **Supporting evidence available:** Do you have baseline and follow-up survey data, monitoring records, or previous evaluation findings that show progress across these outcome areas? Funders expect to see evidence of change over time rather than descriptions of delivery activity alone. This may include outcome survey movement, changes in wellbeing, reductions in offending-related risk, or increased participation in education, employment or training recorded through monitoring data.
3. **Examples of change identified:** Can you describe typical patterns of change observed across participants rather than individual case stories? Funders are usually looking for repeatable evidence such as improved confidence managing difficult situations, increased engagement with services, stronger relationships with trusted adults, or clearer future planning across cohorts.

- 
4. **Beneficiary voice available:** Do you collect structured reflection or feedback from young people that helps explain how change develops through mentoring relationships? Participant voice strengthens outcome evidence by showing how mentoring supports reflection, decision making, and behaviour change in practice rather than reporting survey findings alone.
5. **Delivery scale information available:** Can you state how many participants you support each year, how referrals are received, and how many young people are typically engaged at any one time? Funders use this information to understand how widely outcomes are expected to occur across your cohort rather than how many sessions are delivered.
6. **Reporting statements ready to adapt:** Do you have short impact summary statements that combine outcome areas, monitoring evidence, and participant experience and can be adapted for use across funding applications? Preparing these statements in advance makes it easier to respond clearly and consistently to common impact questions across different bids.

ABOUT COMMUNITY IMPACT

Community Impact supports charities to move beyond simply collecting and reporting data to using this to build organisational and community capacity. We do this by:

- Showing charities how to use evaluation data operationally to support service/programme delivery
- Supporting performance and programme improvement
- Using data to support business development and fundraising
- Identifying how service users go on to play active roles in their communities.

www.communityimpactcic.org

