



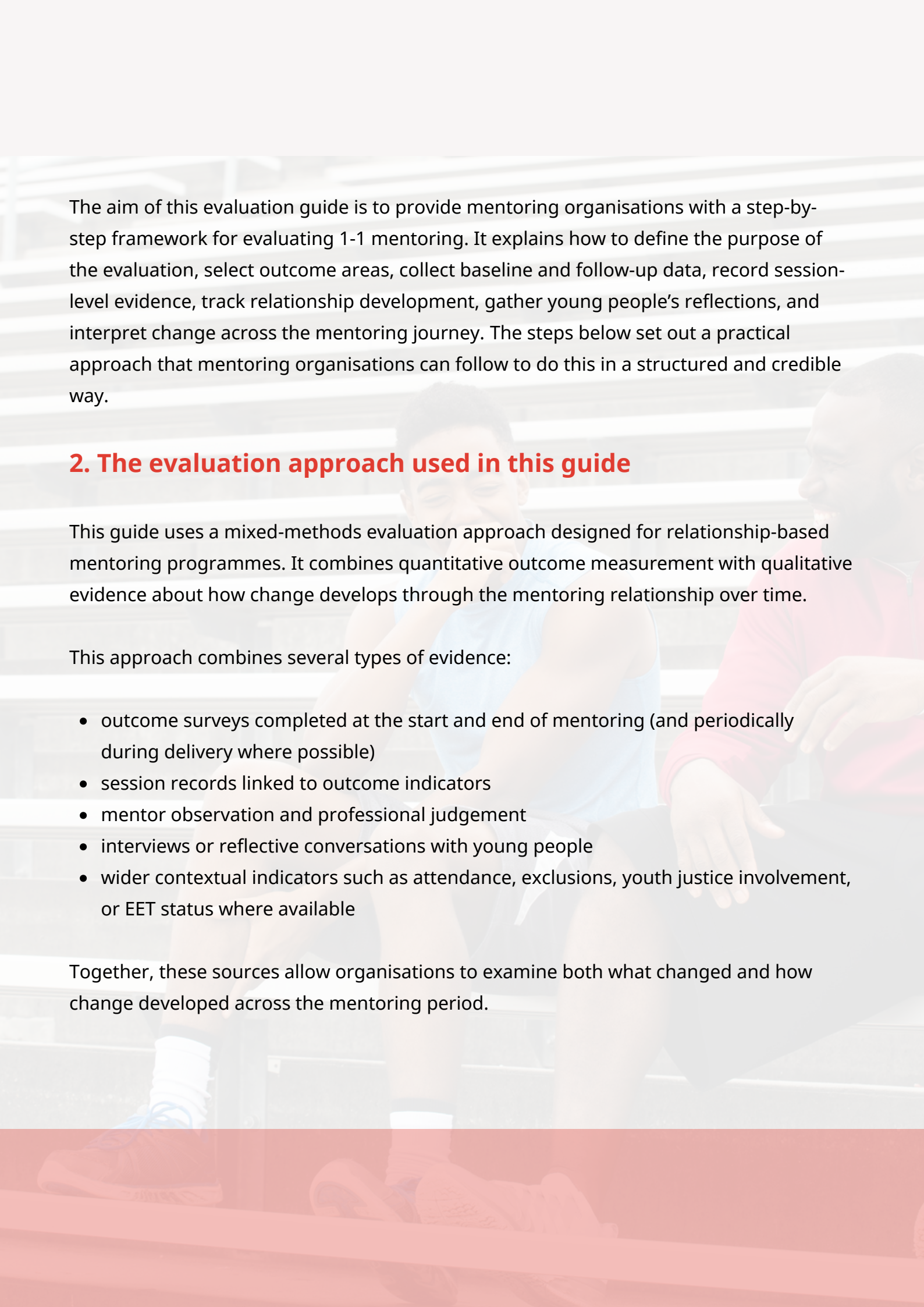
How to evaluate 1-1 mentoring programmes: A step-by-step guide

The 1-1 Mentoring Toolkit

1. Introduction

One-to-one mentoring is best understood as the development of a relationship between the mentee and their mentor. Although mentoring might involve structured activities or reflective exercises at particular points, the intervention itself is the developmental journey that a young person takes through the mentoring relationship rather than the activities delivered within it. Mentoring operates through what is sometimes termed a '*dyadic*' relationship between a mentor and mentee in which engagement, reflection, and behavioural development emerge over time through sustained interaction. In many cases, mentoring begins through referral from schools, youth justice services, or safeguarding partners, and young people may initially attend because the support is expected or required rather than actively chosen. Early contact is therefore often practical and transactional. As trust develops, mentoring might shift from externally motivated participation towards voluntary engagement, with the relationship becoming a space in which young people begin to reflect, make decisions, and act differently in their lives. Evidence across mentoring studies shows that outcomes depend primarily on the quality and duration of the mentoring relationship rather than the specific activities used in sessions, which means evaluation needs to pay close attention to how relationships form and develop over time.

Because change develops through this progression, mentoring cannot be evaluated only by counting sessions or activities. An evaluation needs to examine *how* relationships develop, what changes during engagement, and how learning transfers beyond the mentoring space over time. This means that mentoring evaluation is concerned not only with whether change occurred, but also with how, when, and through what relational processes that change emerged. Mentoring evaluations therefore, need to combine outcome measurement with approaches capable of capturing interaction, reflection, behavioural development, and the wider contextual factors shaping a young person's engagement with mentoring.

A young man in a blue tank top and a man in a red long-sleeved shirt are sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. They are both smiling and looking at each other, appearing to be in a positive conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the bench and some greenery.

The aim of this evaluation guide is to provide mentoring organisations with a step-by-step framework for evaluating 1-1 mentoring. It explains how to define the purpose of the evaluation, select outcome areas, collect baseline and follow-up data, record session-level evidence, track relationship development, gather young people's reflections, and interpret change across the mentoring journey. The steps below set out a practical approach that mentoring organisations can follow to do this in a structured and credible way.

2. The evaluation approach used in this guide

This guide uses a mixed-methods evaluation approach designed for relationship-based mentoring programmes. It combines quantitative outcome measurement with qualitative evidence about how change develops through the mentoring relationship over time.

This approach combines several types of evidence:

- outcome surveys completed at the start and end of mentoring (and periodically during delivery where possible)
- session records linked to outcome indicators
- mentor observation and professional judgement
- interviews or reflective conversations with young people
- wider contextual indicators such as attendance, exclusions, youth justice involvement, or EET status where available

Together, these sources allow organisations to examine both what changed and how change developed across the mentoring period.



Evaluation in this guide is based on three principles.

- **First, mentoring impact is measured directly through outcomes and indicators.** Outcomes describe areas of development such as relationships, wellbeing, or decision making. Indicators describe what we would expect to observe if change is taking place. Tracking indicators across sessions allows progress to be interpreted systematically rather than relying only on informal impressions.
- **Second, mentoring impact develops through interaction over time.** Because 1-1 mentoring is a relational intervention rather than a curriculum-, or activity-based programme, evaluation needs to examine how trust forms, how reflection develops, and how decisions and behaviour change as the relationship progresses.
- **Third, mentoring contributes to wider changes by influencing risk pathways.** Evaluation data might not show how mentoring directly produces outcomes such as reduced offending or improved attendance at school or other EET settings on its own. Instead, it might show how prolonged engagement changes the likelihood of escalation into higher-risk events over time. An evaluation therefore, needs to consider both movement within developmental outcome areas as well as changes in exposure to wider risks.

This approach allows mentoring organisations to produce structured, credible evidence about the difference their work makes while remaining realistic about what mentoring can and cannot influence directly.

3. A Step-by-Step Guide

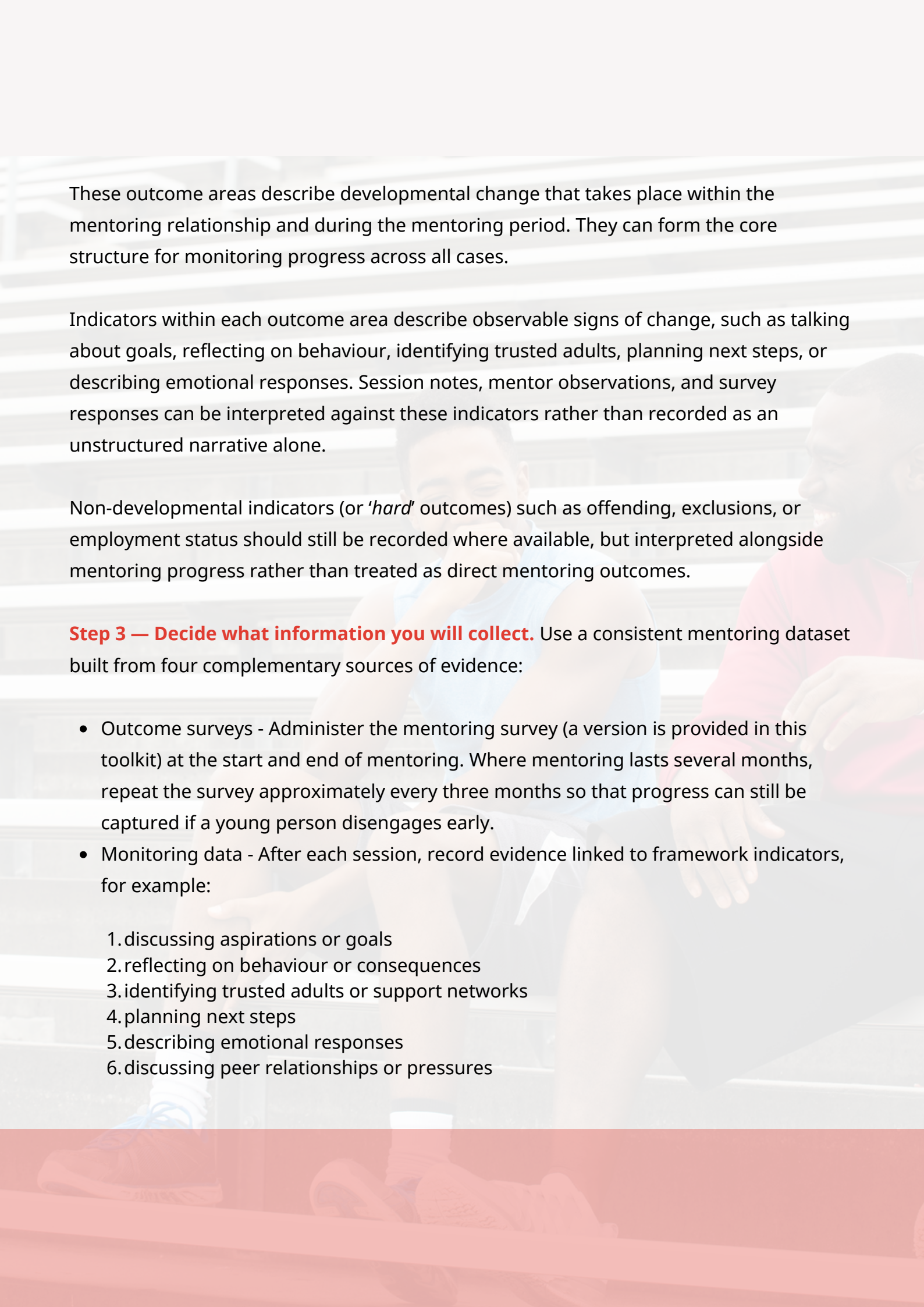
Step 1 — Decide what you want your evaluation to understand. Start by being clear about the purpose of the evaluation. Most mentoring evaluations aim to answer one or more of the following questions:

- *What difference does mentoring make for young people?*
- *How does mentoring produce that difference?*
- *Which young people benefit most?*
- *What changes happen during mentoring, and what happens afterwards?*

Because 1-1 mentoring works through relationships rather than activities alone, evaluation should examine both outcomes and interaction over time.

Step 2 — Select the outcome areas you will measure. Use the 1-1 mentoring outcomes framework in this toolkit as the structure for your evaluation. The framework identifies eight areas of developmental change that mentoring can be expected to influence:

- relationships
- EET (education, training, and employment engagement)
- resilience
- self-regulation
- planning ahead
- wellbeing
- decision making
- community connection

A young man and a woman are sitting on concrete steps outdoors. The young man, on the left, is wearing a blue tank top and blue sneakers, and is smiling while looking towards the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing a red top and is also smiling, looking back at the young man. They appear to be in a positive, engaged conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the steps and some greenery.

These outcome areas describe developmental change that takes place within the mentoring relationship and during the mentoring period. They can form the core structure for monitoring progress across all cases.

Indicators within each outcome area describe observable signs of change, such as talking about goals, reflecting on behaviour, identifying trusted adults, planning next steps, or describing emotional responses. Session notes, mentor observations, and survey responses can be interpreted against these indicators rather than recorded as an unstructured narrative alone.

Non-developmental indicators (or '*hard*' outcomes) such as offending, exclusions, or employment status should still be recorded where available, but interpreted alongside mentoring progress rather than treated as direct mentoring outcomes.

Step 3 — Decide what information you will collect. Use a consistent mentoring dataset built from four complementary sources of evidence:

- Outcome surveys - Administer the mentoring survey (a version is provided in this toolkit) at the start and end of mentoring. Where mentoring lasts several months, repeat the survey approximately every three months so that progress can still be captured if a young person disengages early.
- Monitoring data - After each session, record evidence linked to framework indicators, for example:
 1. discussing aspirations or goals
 2. reflecting on behaviour or consequences
 3. identifying trusted adults or support networks
 4. planning next steps
 5. describing emotional responses
 6. discussing peer relationships or pressures

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- Mentor observation and judgement - Mentor judgement helps interpret pacing, readiness for reflection, and shifts in engagement. Recording these observations helps explain why change occurs at different speeds for different young people. In case-based mentoring evaluations, mentor observations are often analysed thematically across multiple cases to identify recurring engagement patterns, providing an additional layer of evidence about how mentoring operates in practice.
 - Short interviews or reflective conversations. These help explain how change happened, not just whether it happened.

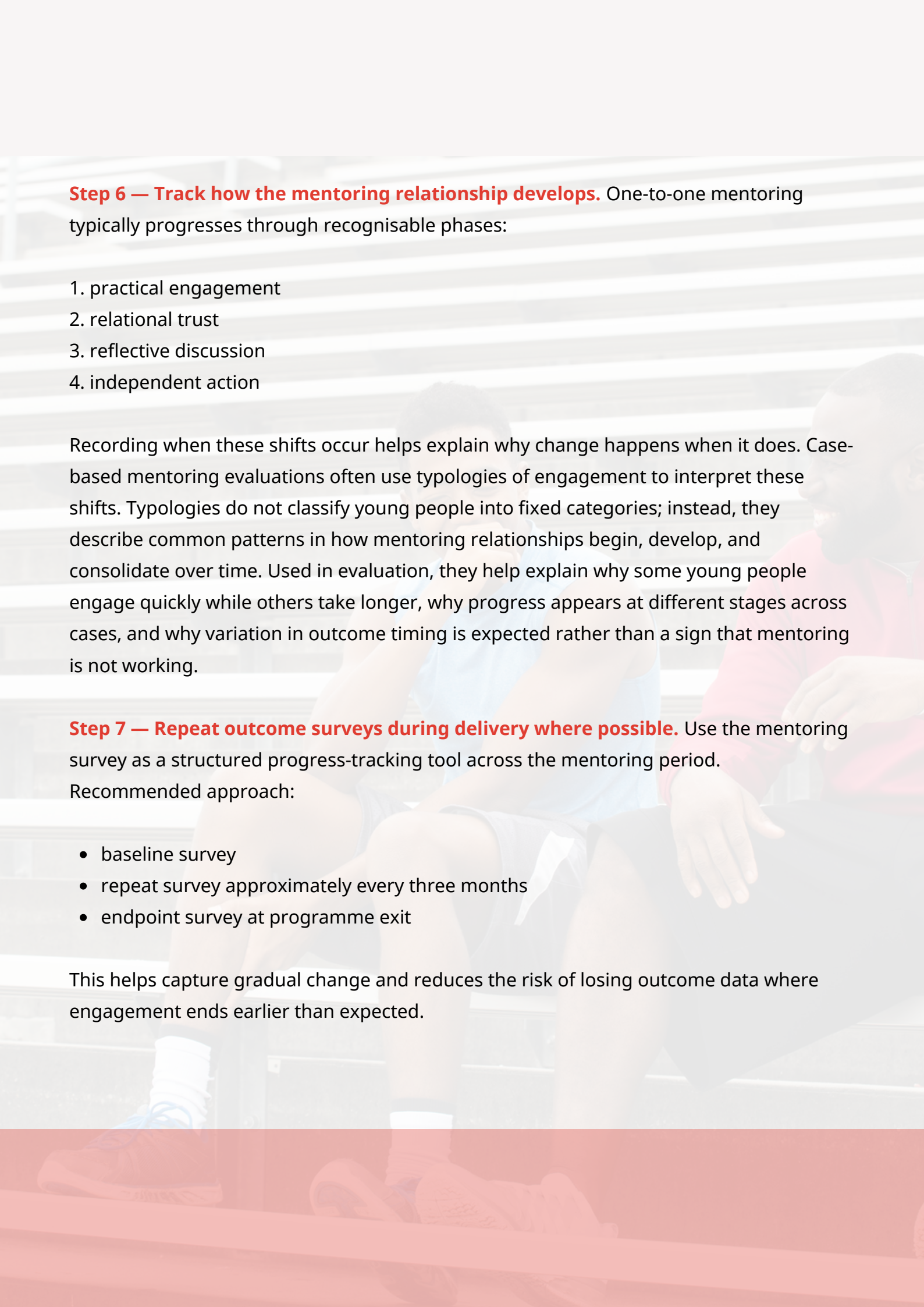
Step 4 — Collect baseline information before mentoring begins. Before mentoring starts, record:

- survey responses
- referral context
- presenting needs
- risk indicators
- engagement level
- education or employment status (where available)

This creates a starting point against which change can be interpreted later.

Step 5 — Record what happens during mentoring. During mentoring, record evidence that links session activity to outcome indicators in the framework. Examples include:

- whether the session took place
- topics discussed
- goals set or reviewed
- practical support provided
- discussion of relationships, decisions, or emotions
- evidence of planning, reflection, or problem solving



Step 6 — Track how the mentoring relationship develops. One-to-one mentoring typically progresses through recognisable phases:

1. practical engagement
2. relational trust
3. reflective discussion
4. independent action

Recording when these shifts occur helps explain why change happens when it does. Case-based mentoring evaluations often use typologies of engagement to interpret these shifts. Typologies do not classify young people into fixed categories; instead, they describe common patterns in how mentoring relationships begin, develop, and consolidate over time. Used in evaluation, they help explain why some young people engage quickly while others take longer, why progress appears at different stages across cases, and why variation in outcome timing is expected rather than a sign that mentoring is not working.

Step 7 — Repeat outcome surveys during delivery where possible. Use the mentoring survey as a structured progress-tracking tool across the mentoring period. Recommended approach:

- baseline survey
- repeat survey approximately every three months
- endpoint survey at programme exit

This helps capture gradual change and reduces the risk of losing outcome data where engagement ends earlier than expected.



Step 8 — Collect young people's reflections on change. Collect qualitative evidence through short interviews or, where appropriate and safe, small focus groups.

In many 1-1 mentoring programmes, individual interviews are the preferred method because some young people may be involved in high-risk peer contexts, including conflict between groups or gangs. In these situations, bringing mentees together is not appropriate. Where group discussion is safe and participants already know each other through delivery settings such as schools, focus groups can provide additional insight into shared experiences of mentoring. Useful prompts include:

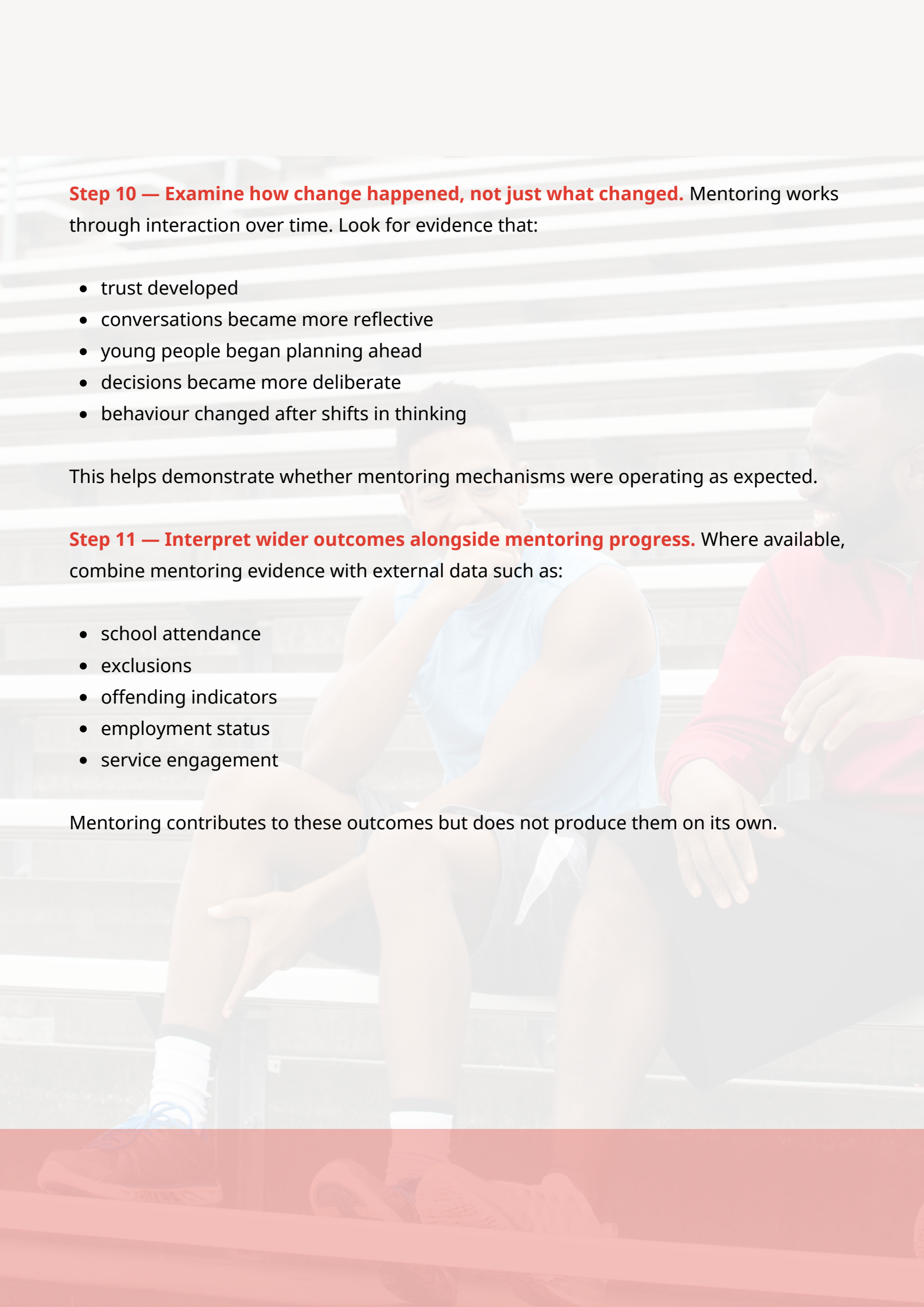
- *what has changed since mentoring began?*
- *what helped those changes happen?*
- *what they learned about themselves?*
- *what they are doing differently now?*

These responses provide evidence about mechanisms such as trust, reflection, and decision making.

Step 9 — Compare start and end points. At the end of mentoring, compare:

- baseline survey responses
- follow-up survey responses
- session monitoring data linked to framework indicators
- interview evidence

Look for patterns of movement across outcome areas. In many mentoring relationships, early change is first observed in relationships, wellbeing, and emotional regulation, followed later by changes in planning, decision making, and engagement with education or employment pathways. Tracking the sequence of change helps interpret whether mentoring mechanisms operated as expected.



Step 10 — Examine how change happened, not just what changed. Mentoring works through interaction over time. Look for evidence that:

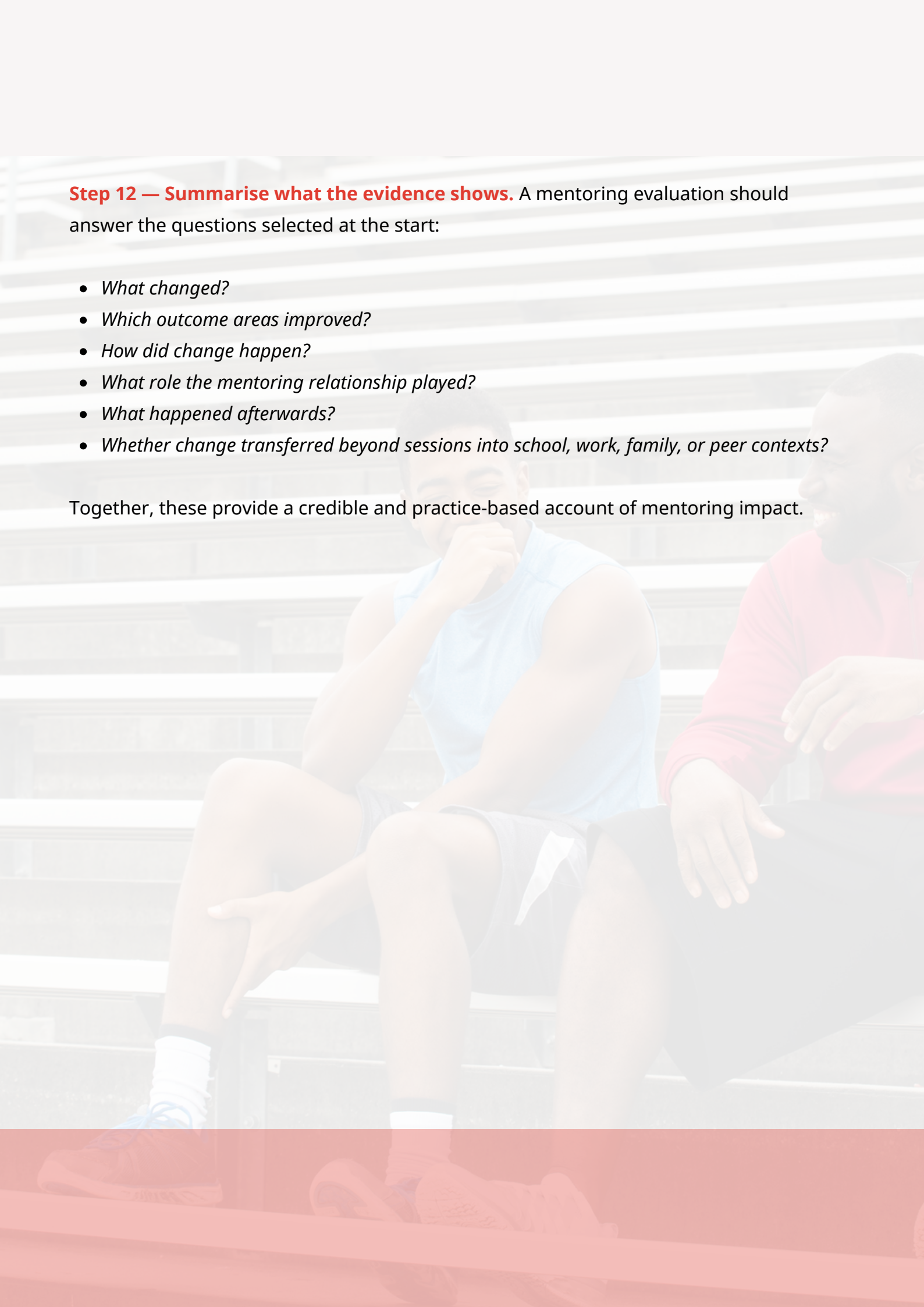
- trust developed
- conversations became more reflective
- young people began planning ahead
- decisions became more deliberate
- behaviour changed after shifts in thinking

This helps demonstrate whether mentoring mechanisms were operating as expected.

Step 11 — Interpret wider outcomes alongside mentoring progress. Where available, combine mentoring evidence with external data such as:

- school attendance
- exclusions
- offending indicators
- employment status
- service engagement

Mentoring contributes to these outcomes but does not produce them on its own.



Step 12 — Summarise what the evidence shows. A mentoring evaluation should answer the questions selected at the start:

- *What changed?*
- *Which outcome areas improved?*
- *How did change happen?*
- *What role the mentoring relationship played?*
- *What happened afterwards?*
- *Whether change transferred beyond sessions into school, work, family, or peer contexts?*

Together, these provide a credible and practice-based account of mentoring impact.

ABOUT COMMUNITY IMPACT

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- 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.

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