



Belong Mentoring
Programme Report;
HMP Brixton and
London Communities

01/02/24 - 31/03/25

Registered Charity No. 1172293
www.belongmakingjusticehappen.co.uk
enquiries@belongmakingjusticehappen.co.uk

Contents

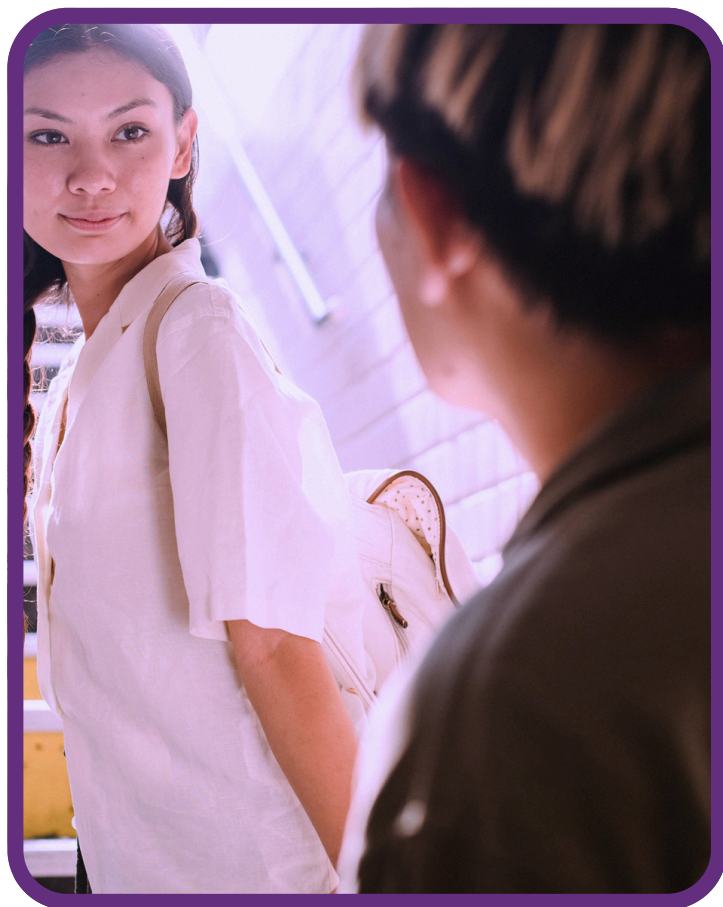
Introduction	2
Overview of the Mentoring Programme	3
Summary of Challenges Faced	4
Numerical Breakdown	5
Summary of Toolkits Used	9
Summary of Successes	10
Case Studies	13
Glossary	15



Introduction

Founded in 2010, Belong enables hope, rehabilitation and recovery by working alongside victims and perpetrators of harm. We work with people of all ages in prisons and other communities offering mentoring, creative psychotherapy and restorative justice interventions. We also deliver training to professionals working in the criminal justice sector and use our frontline knowledge to help develop a more humane and just criminal justice system.

Since 2022, we have gratefully received funding from Tresanton Trust towards a mentoring programme for men serving sentences in HMP Brixton, which also provides support after release. With Tresanton Trust's generosity, we have been able to support individuals at critical, transitional stages in their lives. This has had wider impacts on their families and communities.



Mentoring participants have often faced multiple disadvantages before coming into contact with the criminal justice system such as adverse childhood experiences, mental health problems, housing needs, substance dependence, unemployment, and broken family relationships. These disadvantages may underlie their previous offending behaviour, and Belong's mentoring programme is designed to enable participants to tackle and overcome these issues so that they are better equipped to lead positive and crime free lives. This report will showcase the mentoring programme; its successes and challenges; and how the support has been experienced by recent participants.

Overview of the Mentoring Programme

Belong mentors have provided varied support to those they have worked with. Mentoring sessions are typically held in person every week or fortnight within HMP Brixton and then in the community for up to six months after each person's release. Mentors encourage mentees' reintegration into and constructive participation in their community by assisting them to:

- Access information about opportunities within their communities;
- Build up budgeting skills and resolve debts;
- Practice interview skills and write good quality CVs and criminal records disclosure statements;
- Apply for employment, education, training and leisure activities;
- Resolve any relationship problems they face;
- And Engage with relevant services in their community e.g. healthcare, probation, job centres.

Two mentors have attended ACCT reviews (held when someone discloses thoughts of self-harm or suicide) and several have been involved in the opening of ACCT documents when a participant has disclosed thoughts of self-harm or suicide in a session. This speaks to both how Belong mentors make the prison a safer environment for those they work with and the non-judgemental, supportive relationships which are built between mentors and mentees.

Another mentor attended a handover meeting with the mentee and their community probation practitioner, at the request of the mentee. He reported feeling more supported and asked for engagement with Belong to be included in his release plan.

Furthermore, most other mentoring programmes based within HMP Brixton have disqualifying factors or barriers to entry that Belong does not. For example, both Bounceback and Trailblazers do not work with people convicted of sexual offences, and Trailblazers only work with men under 35. Change4Good work with the same cohort as Belong, but as they are run through the Christian chaplaincy, potential services users of no faith or faiths excluding chaplaincy may be discouraged from participating or may not be aware of the support Change4Good can offer them.

Because Belong's only criterion for engagement is having three or more months of a custodial sentence left to serve, we can work with a higher number of people and provide broader support in mentoring sessions than other similar programmes. Mentees repeatedly state that they are pleased to be able to continue working with their mentor if they regress onto basic regime and appreciate that the support is less conditional than other programmes on offer to them.



Summary of the Challenges Faced Delivering the Project and How We Worked to Overcome These

Many of our mentees have complex needs, such as mental health issues, substance misuse issues, relationship issues and employment concerns. To provide the best support possible we have built relationships with other organisations that offer specific assistance in these areas as well as providing our own support.

The needs of those on our caseload has been very varied, meaning their engagement can be unpredictable and, albeit irregularly, sporadic. Despite this, Belong mentors have consistently shown up for our participants.

One specific challenge is completing the CRIME PICs and Your Wellbeing forms. These are the validated evaluation questionnaires that we aim to use in our evaluation process and report. Mentors report that participants often struggle to fully engage with forms and can view them as box-ticking exercises, being reticent to complete them on any regular basis. When they are completed, some mentors have reported concerns that participants give answers they think their mentor wants to hear, rather than the truth. We have tried to work around this but providing a non-judgemental space throughout the intervention, and by building up a rapport with mentees before introducing the forms.



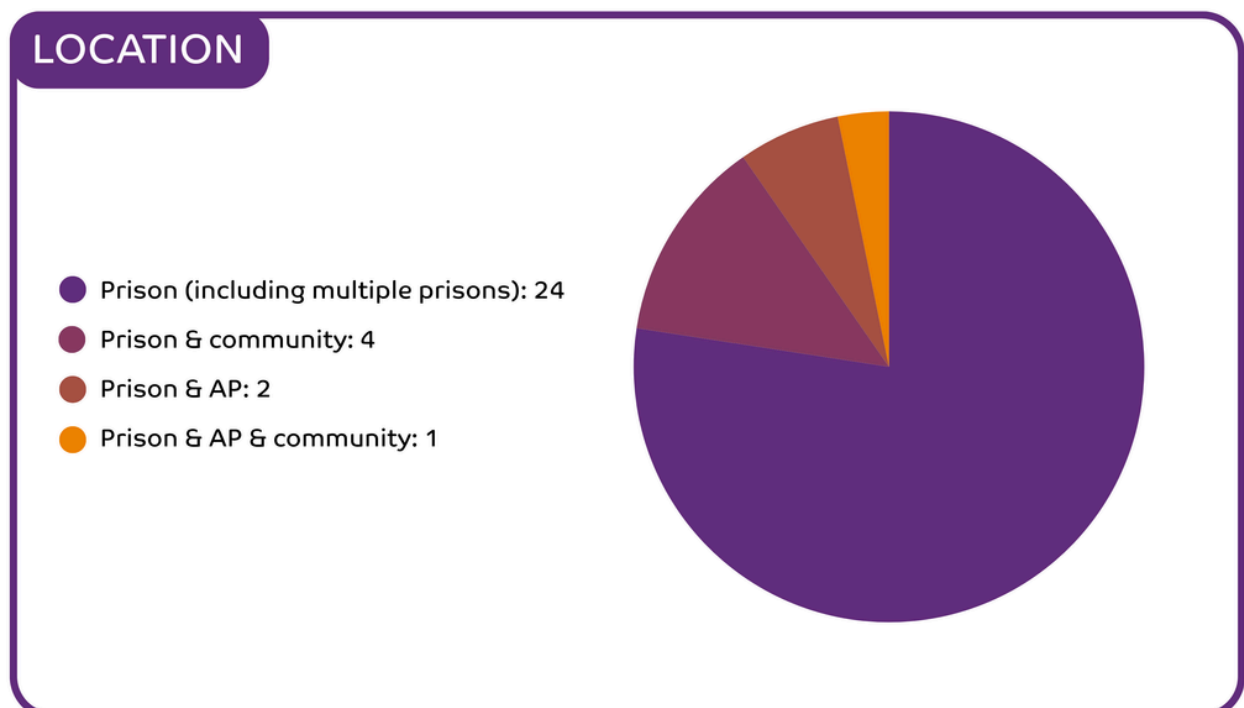
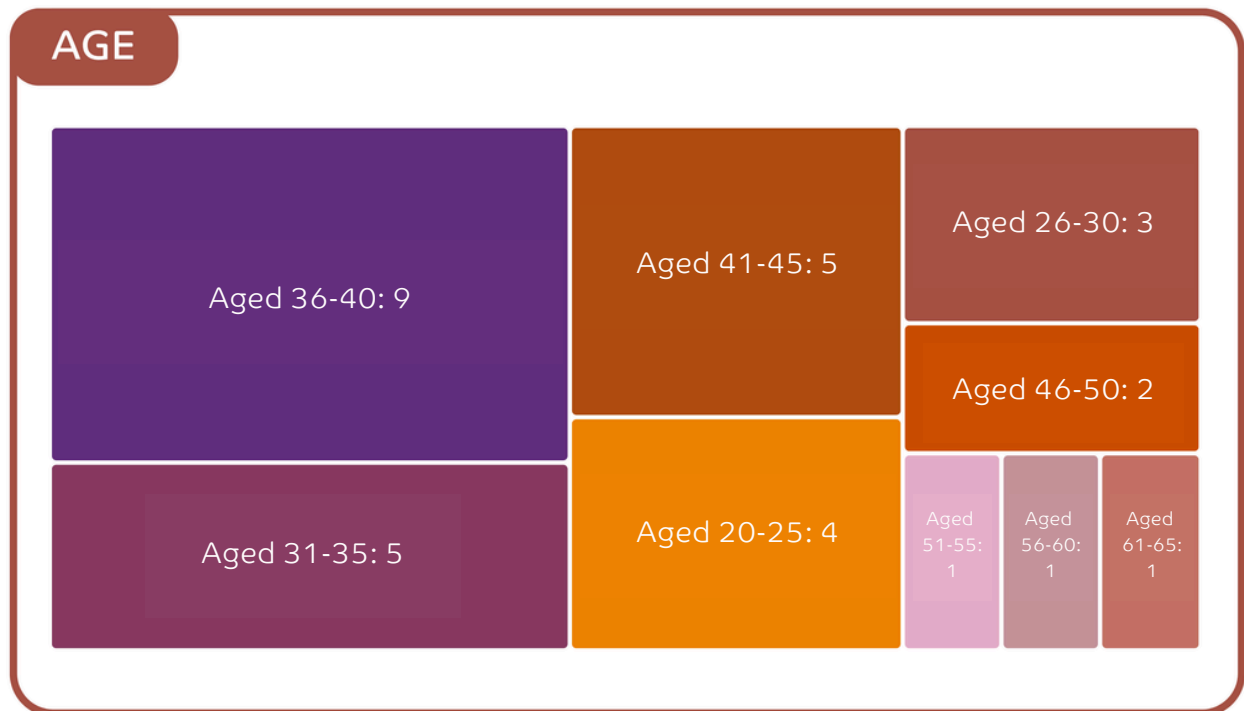
A final challenge is that the need for Belong's mentoring programme is greater than our resources have been able to meet. Over the 02/24 -05/25 funding period we have had the support of 11 volunteer mentors. In the same period, we received 93 referrals. Of these, only 31 men were allocated a mentor, and six are on the waiting list. 17 left HMP Brixton having been eligible for support, but without the mentor capacity to do that.

We have worked to overcome this by recruiting and training new volunteers twice per year, in June and November. Recruiting people for volunteer positions has been difficult; increasing economic difficulty means fewer people have the time or financial freedom to commit to a volunteer position. Despite this, across the funding period 02/24-05/25 we recruited and trained a further 12 volunteer mentors, three of whom have mentored at HMP Brixton. We continue to hold mentor recruitment and training events, and in June 2025 trained a further six volunteer mentors to join the programme at HMP Brixton.

Numerical Breakdown of the Mentoring Project

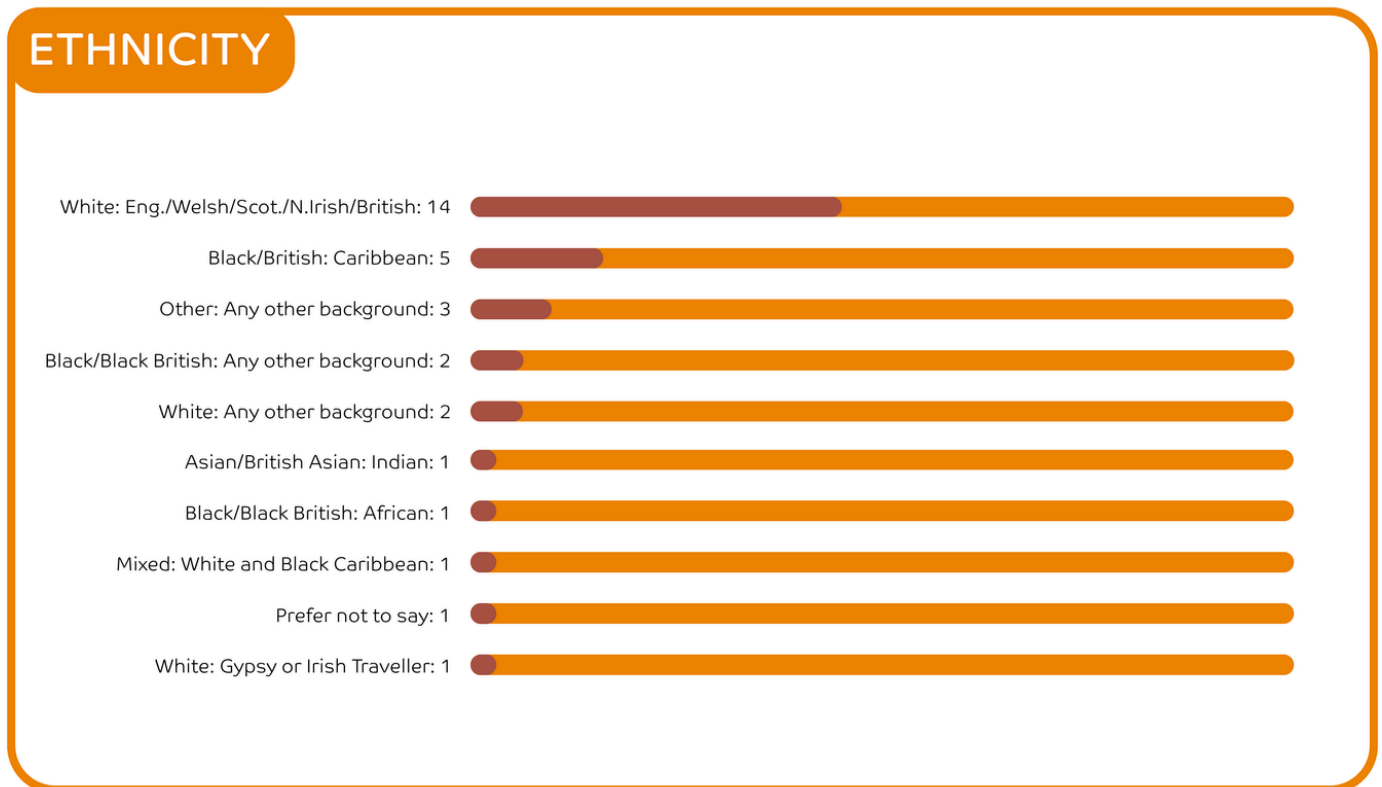
In the funding period 02/24-03/25, Belong provided mentoring support to 31 men in HMP Brixton. We supported seven of these men through the gate, including three to Approved Premises before transitioning to the community. Four men were also supported in multiple prisons, through visits and emails following transfers.

The most-represented age group worked with was men between 36-40, with nine men in this cohort. The next two most-represented age groups were either side of this: five men aged 31-35 and five men aged 41-45. In the two youngest age cohorts, 20-25 and 26-30, there were four and three participants respectively. There were two participants in the 46-50 cohort, and one in each of the 51-55, 56-60 and 61-65 cohorts.



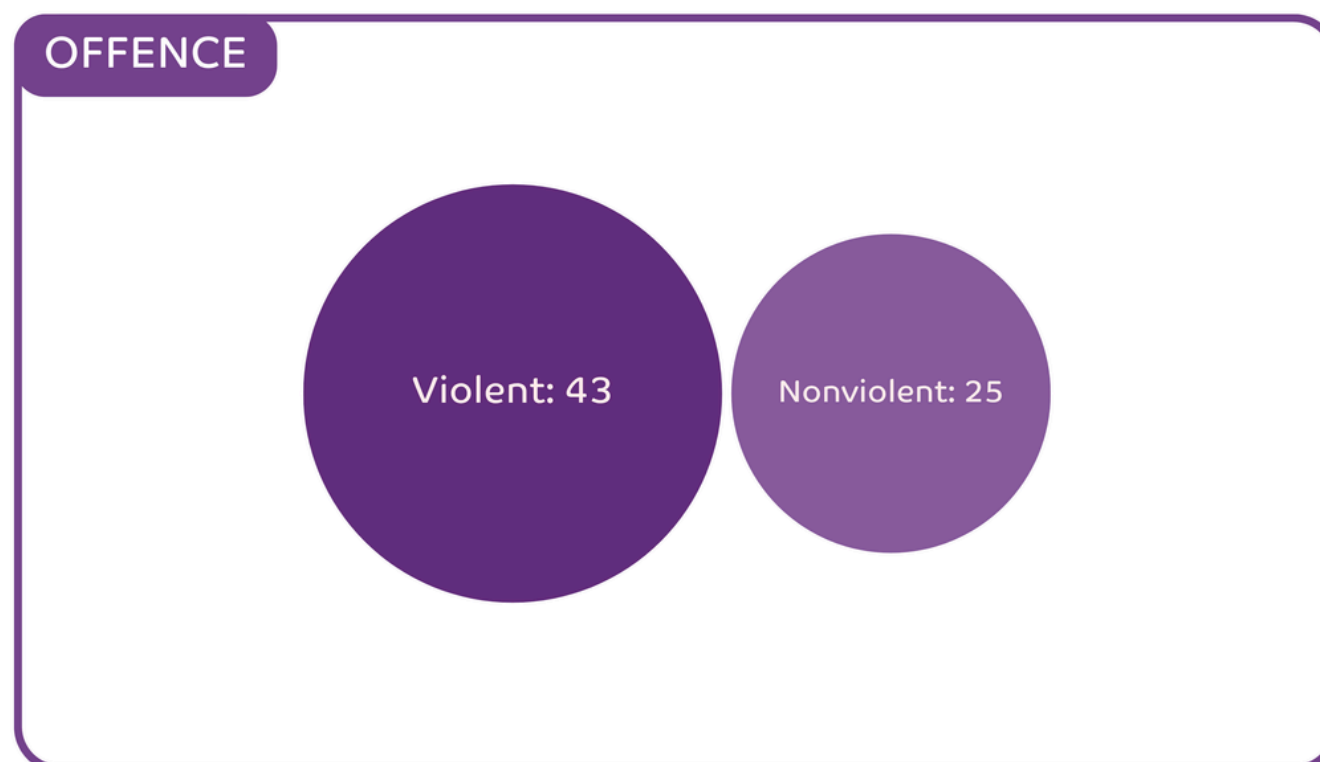
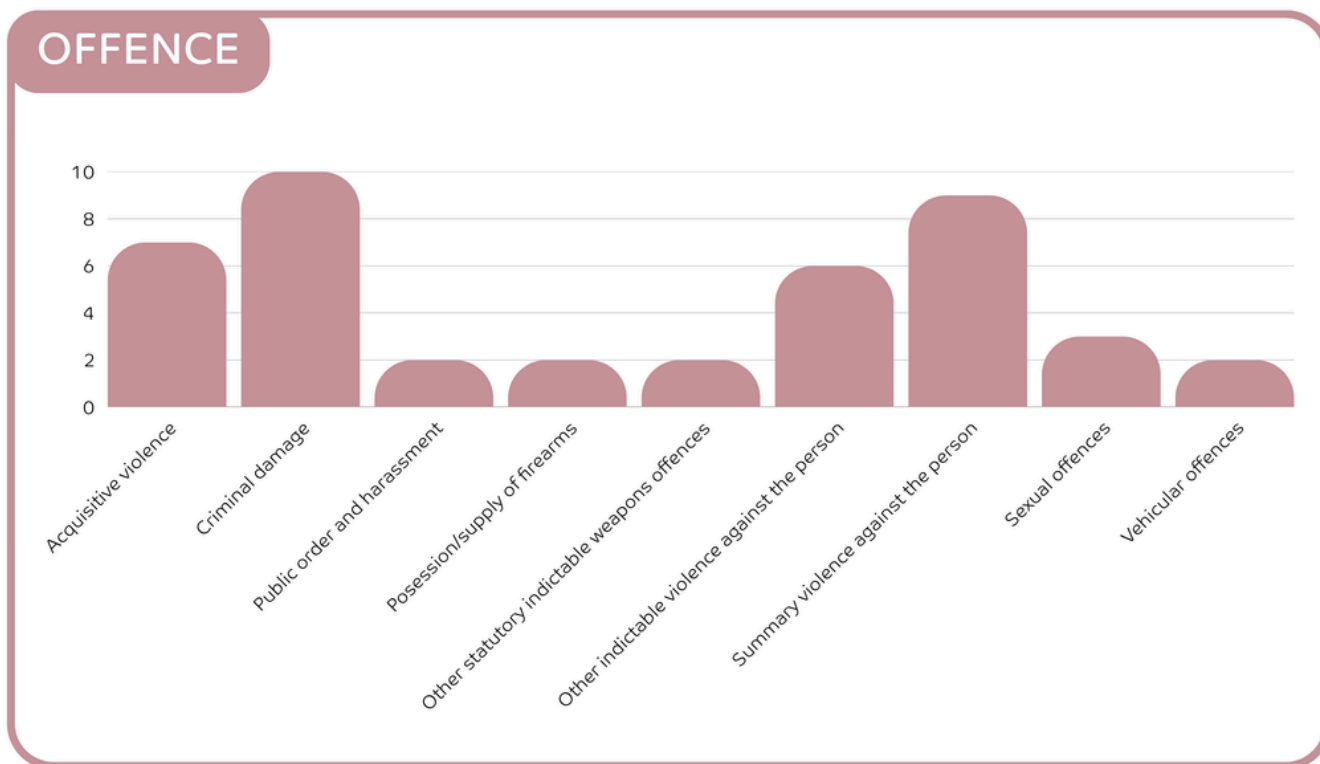
Numerical Breakdown of the Mentoring Project

Nearly half the participants, 14 out of 31, were 'White British'. The next most represented ethnic group was 'Black/Black British: Caribbean' with five participants. There were three participants whose ethnicity was 'Other: Any other background' and two participants who were 'White: Any other background: and 'Black/Black British: Any other background'. There was one participant from each of the following backgrounds: 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller'; 'Black/Black British: African'; 'Asian/British Asian: Indian' and 'Mixed: White and Black Caribbean'. One individual opted for 'Prefer not to say'.



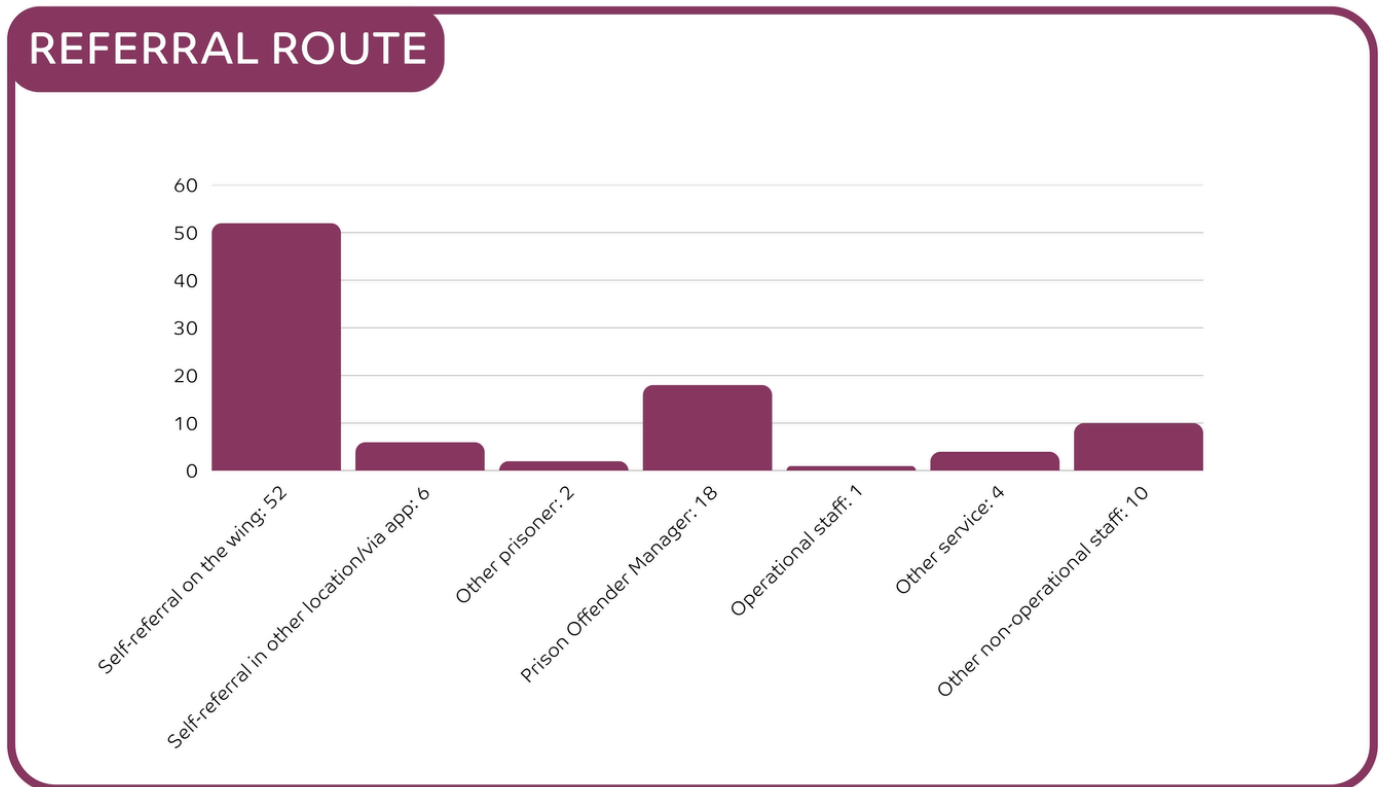
Numerical Breakdown of the Mentoring Project

Two thirds of offences committed by participants were violent, and one third non-violent. 'Criminal damage' offences were the most common violent offence, with ten convictions, followed by nine convictions for 'summary violence against the person'. 'Acquisitive violence' and 'other indictable violence against the person' had seven and six convictions respectively. There were three convictions for sexual offences amongst the participants and were two convictions for 'public order and harassment'; 'possession/supply of firearms'; 'other statutory indictable weapons offences' and 'vehicular offences'.



Numerical Breakdown of the Mentoring Project

The mentoring programme received 93 referrals in the period 02/24-03/25. 52 were self-referrals on the wing, a further six self-referrals in other locations or via application. In two instances, active participants recommended individuals they thought would benefit from the support of a mentor. Prison Offender Managers referred 18 times, and other non-operational staff made 10 referrals. Operational staff, from the Care and Supervision Unit, made one referral and other services referred a further 4 individuals.



Summary of Toolkits Used

Facing Up to Conflict

Facing Up to Conflict is a 6-week course created by the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). Belong has an agreement with the AVP that we can facilitate their work with our mentees. The course helps participants to understand their emotions better, improve their self-esteem, know how to manage conflict without resorting to physical violence, or avoiding it, communicate better with other people, find solutions to problems and learn to trust other people more. Some of our mentees have found it difficult to think about these areas, especially as they have often experienced conflict in a negative way, but mentors have guided them through the course. Several of the participants who have used FUtC have completed sections of the workbook independently, and sections with their mentor. Those who struggle with literacy have been able to undertake the workbook entirely with their mentor.

One mentee said he felt 'a great deal more' confident and optimistic about how he will manage conflict having completed the toolkit. Another said it gave him 'insight' into things he felt he should have already known and that he felt he was 'a lot better' at cooling off when he got angry.

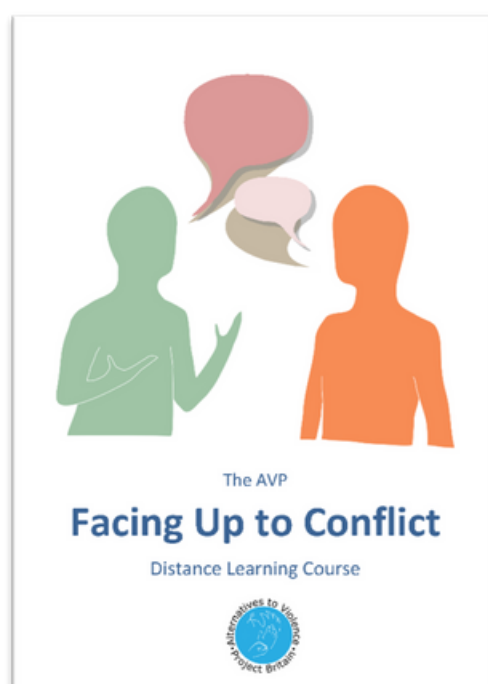
Conflict Resolution Toolkit

Belong's Conflict Resolution Toolkit was created to help participants deal with conflict in a healthy and useful way. It encourages them to reflect on previous conflicts they have been involved in or witness to, in order to help them react positively to future conflicts. The toolkit was adapted for three different age groups 15 - 18, 18 - 25 and 25+.

One mentee who used the toolkit independently reported that he'd found it useful when dealing with an officer he had a poor relationship with.

Trauma workbook

Belong's Trauma workbook was created to help those who have experienced trauma to understand the affects and help them process it. The trauma workbook provides participants with a description of what trauma is, an explanation of the affects it can have as well as information on treatment available as well as some practical grounding techniques and relaxation activities.



Summary of Successes, Referrals to Other Services and Feedback from Mentees and Professionals in the Space

Employment

Belong mentors assist their mentees with creating CVs and writing disclosure letters, as well as providing information on careers, how to perform job searches, and the employment activities on offer through HMP Brixton's Employment Hub.

One mentee had attended several forums in which employers came to HMP Brixton. His mentor and him were able to use a laptop to write a CV, disclosure letter, and letters to the organisations which had visited the prison. They also prepared a grant application for barbering tools, which was his trade before coming to prison. In a conversation with the service manager, the mentee said it gave him a sense of power and control over his future.

Engagement

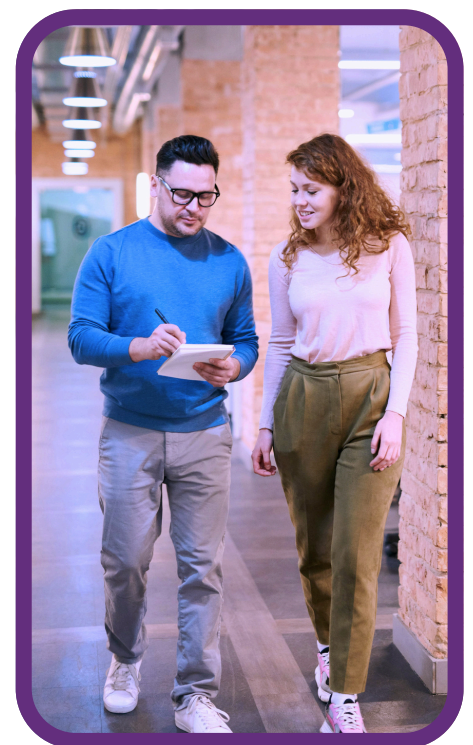
Belong has achieved prolonged engagement from mentees who have found it difficult to work with other programmes or buy in to the prison regime, demonstrating our ability to tailor our support to individuals in a way that encourages their commitment. We are currently working with one individual for a period of 1 year and 10 months and have supported two other individuals for periods of a year and a month and 12 months.

Furthermore, of the 31 men supported in the funding period, eight out of the eligible 12 have accepted some 'through the gate' community-based support. This figure is particularly impressive given Belong does not have an information sharing agreement with HMPPS, meaning mentees must proactively reach out to their mentors once in the community. We give our phone numbers to them whilst in custody, as well as their community probation practitioners and other service providers they are engaging with, such as staff at Approved Premises.

Accommodation

Mentors have assisted their mentees' explorations of suitable accommodation. Mentors have made and assisted with referrals to St. Mungo's and rehabilitation centres and communicated concerns to Community Offender Managers. One mentor also spoke to a housing provider on behalf of their mentee to see if he could restart his housing contract with them on release, though ultimately this individual went to CAS2 accommodation.

Furthermore, when mentees are returning to private accommodation, a common concern links to family relationships. One mentee told his mentor he was concerned about his relationship with his partner, and his young daughter not growing up in an 'emotionally secure' environment. His mentor gave him the opportunity to verbalise his anxieties and reflections, such as that those closest to him often saw him at his 'worst'. He and his mentor discussed ways to communicate with his partner and manage his expectations around a 'perfect' relationship, which settled his feelings about moving back in together.



Summary of Successes, Referrals to Other Services and Feedback from Mentees and Professionals in the Space

Referrals to Other Services

Belong works closely with mentees and other service providers to refer them to other services they may not necessarily have been aware of or had the confidence to contact on their own.

Our mentors have also made referrals to or had productive discussions with St. Mungo's, Children's Social Services, PACT, Change4Good, Changing Lanes, Oasis Community Housing, CFO Evolution, St. Giles Trust, Gideon Supported Housing, the Kenworth Trust, Support When It Matters, Kairos Community Trust, HMP Brixton Equalities department, Forward Trust, Trailblazers, No Going Back and more.

One participant was referred to Kairos Community Trust, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. The Forward Trust had encouraged him to think about whether he wanted to go to a rehabilitation facility, and the mentee was able to go through pros and cons with his mentor. When he decided he wanted to go ahead with a referral, his mentor was able to bring the assessment date forward, lessening the mentee's feelings of anxiety, and was invited to be present at the assessment itself. He was duly accepted to the rehabilitation facility.



Feedback on the Programme

When asked what it was like being part of the Belong mentoring programme one mentee said 'It was helpful when I needed it most. I enjoyed it, it was something different, it got me through the day, a different way to spend time. It helped some areas, like suicidal thoughts'.

When asked the same question, another participant replied 'Amazing, literally all my needs were met, could not fault you for one thing, it's not often you have that in the prison system'.

When asked 'How would you describe the mentoring programme to someone who was deciding whether to take part in the programme for the first time?' one participant said 'It's a lot of help, the most I've had in prison, I've got the most out of these sessions of anything, I felt really supported'.

When asked what it had been like working with Belong as partner agency in HMP Brixton, one Prison Offender Manager praised the Belong mentors for 'their constant encouragement, willingness to listen and the one-to-one work they complete with supporting the men back into the community'.

Another Prison Offender Manager said 'The services offered by Belong at HMP Brixton have been gratefully received. Will [the project co-ordinator] has embedded himself within the wider OMU team, consistently communicates with staff and provides invaluable information about shared clients. Mentors are regularly introduced and well briefed on the acute needs of their mentees, meaning the service contributes fully to the support and management of vulnerable prisoners.'

Summary of Successes, Referrals to Other Services and Feedback from Mentees and Professionals in the Space

Summary of Measured Outcomes

We measured individual's progress against our mentoring programme's intended outcomes by inviting mentoring participants to complete feedback questionnaires at the end of mentoring and analysing data collected via individual's mentoring session records and via prison and probation databases, to help identify whether individuals have progressed in achieving our evaluation outcomes.

We found that, during and after engaging with mentoring support:

- 65% of mentoring participants increased their engagement in education, training and employment;
- 84% made progress with problems in their lives, for example with housing, finance, benefits and substance misuse;
- 77% increased their engagement with positive activities in their community;
- 74% of mentoring participants increased their prosocial beliefs and attitudes;
- 87% of participants improved their mental health or well-being and
- 81% increased their prosocial relationships with non offending peers and/or family members.



26 participants (84%) of mentoring participants made progress with 3 or more areas and 20 participants (65%) made progress with 5 or more areas. However, some mentoring participants only requested mentoring support with accessing employment, training and education and did not identify problems in other areas of their lives. This meant that for those individuals, this is the area that mentoring support focused on. Improvements that participants made in all of these areas contributed to the mentoring programme's overall goal of enable people who have offended, to move towards crime free lives. All participants made progress in at least one area.

Case Studies of Work Whereby Individuals are Benefiting from the Support

LH

In the first session LH told his mentor about his bisexuality, how it had influenced his offence and his experience of custody. He had been moved to HMP Brixton from another establishment as he had been 'outed' by a staff member and had been the victim of homophobic bullying.

In the sessions that followed, LH's mentor provided a safe space for him to be authentic. They were also able to put LH in touch with the prison's equalities manager. LH was keen to live openly upon release, and him and his mentor discussed what it might be like to tell his family about his sexuality. Together, they worked on applications to LGBTQ+ specific support groups near where LH would be moving to, such as an affordable therapy and creative writing classes, one of LH's artistic outlets, for gay and bisexual men.

When he was released in summer, LH went to an Approved Premises in London and continued engaging with his mentor in the community. LH reached out to his family members and told some of them about his bisexuality. He reported that members of his immediate family had mostly been accepting and had supported him in his telling them of this news.

LH stopped working with his mentor in early 2025 when he had received his employment qualifications and felt comfortable reaching out to his family for support, instead of his mentor.

CB

CB told his mentor he had specific short and long-term aims: to increase his chances of finding stable employment, to continue accessing drug recovery support in the community and to be a better father to his children. CB and his mentor discussed familial relationships, and he told his mentor about his experience of grieving his mother and how this had negatively impacted his substance misuse and subsequent offending behaviour.

As the sessions continued, CB spoke more about the relationship between his drug use and offending behaviour. Together, Tino and his mentor looked at problem solving techniques and coping strategies for drug use. They did a gains and losses exercise and spoke about building a list of achievements to look back on to increase Tino's self-belief as a sober person.

In the final few sessions CB was beginning to feel anxious about his release. He had been accepted to a rehab in his preferred area, which he was glad about. However, he felt unworthy of further support, mistrustful of the progress he had made, and anxious as to what living at a rehabilitation centre would be like, saying he did not think he would feel totally free.

CB's mentor reminded him of the good work he had done and helped CB feel proud of the steps he had already taken to meet his long-term goals. CB and his mentor made lists of good things coming soon: seeing his kids again, moving to stable housing, going somewhere he could continue working towards bettering his life.

In the final session before release CB's anxiety had decreased and he told his mentor that he felt he had a much better understanding of himself.

Case Studies of Work Whereby Individuals are Benefiting from the Support

BB

BB's prison probation practitioner referred him to Belong for support with resettlement preparation, to develop his social skills and resolve not to reoffend. BB also wanted to complete the Facing Up to Conflict workbook, as he had never had a targeted anger management intervention.

BB and his mentor began the workbook together. He showed a thorough understanding of his triggers, such as dishonesty and 'things not making sense'. BB was also able to reflect on how his past feelings of anger had rapidly progressed to violence.

BB opened up about his difficulties with trusting people. He told his mentor he sometimes felt like he had to 'bargain' with bad behaviour to get things done. Despite not wanting to form transactional relationships, and being aware of their pitfalls, BB said he felt that in prison he struggled to construct relationships outside this model.



Another theme that came out of BB's engagement with the course was a sense of feeling 'used' by others, both in the community and in custody. Using the workbook as a starting point, him and his mentor were able to discuss boundaries, transactional relationships and the longer-term effects of anger and aggression on someone's ability to maintain prosocial relationships. BB said that it was useful to have a space to discuss his thoughts on these topics, even if he was still growing in his confidence in how he built relationships with staff and other prisoners.

Over time, BB became more confident in completing the exercises independently and ultimately completed the course by himself.

Glossary

ACCT: Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork document, which someone is put on if they disclose thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

Approved Premises: supported accommodation where someone may reside for up to 3 months following prison if their risk to the community is deemed high.

CAS2 accommodation: Community Accommodation Service, Tier 2. Short-term accommodation and support for people whose risk to the community is deemed low or medium, available to people who do not have a fixed address to return to following the custodial portion of their sentence.

Community probation practitioner: The professional assigned to supervise, manage, signpost and advise people in prison during the portion of their sentence served in the community. They are also responsible for setting license conditions.

FUtC: Facing Up to Conflict, a conflict- and anger-management workbook provided by the Alternatives to Violence Project. The programme is 6 weeks long, accredited, and participants receive a certificate on successful completion.

OMU: Offender Management Unit, where prison and community probation practitioners work.

Prison probation practitioner: The professional assigned to supervise, manage, signpost and advise people in prison during the custodial portion of their sentence.