



One-to-one support through coaching or mentoring

Problem statement

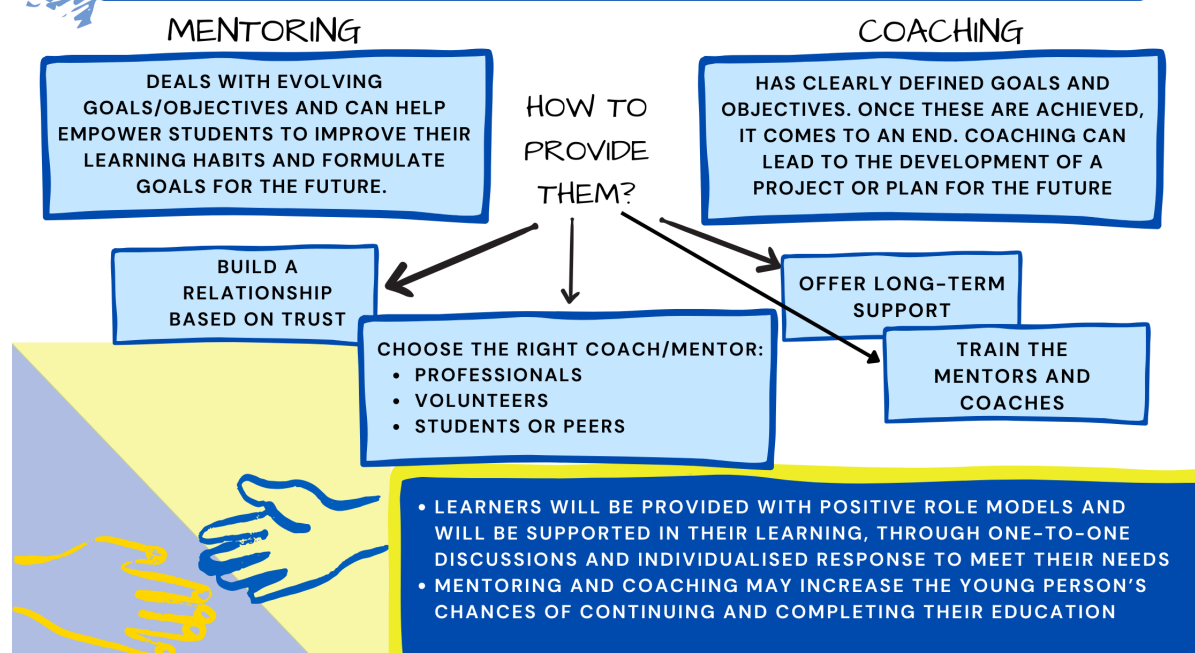
Addressed problem: Drop-out at transition points

Students are at greater risk of dropping out during transition phases and the first year of a new programme. Uncertainty, lack of information on available options, low confidence, reduced perceived relevance of VET programmes, and disengagement from learning can all contribute to dropout.

Ongoing coaching and mentoring can help maintain a young person's motivation and prevent drop-out at key risk points, such as during transitions between pathways or education levels, or in the initial stages of a new programme. It can support learners in overcoming challenges affecting their learning, whether these challenges are related to their educational programme or external factors.

ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT THROUGH COACHING OR MENTORING

ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF A NEW PROGRAMME, AT TRANSITION POINTS OR FOR REINTEGRATION FROM DROP-OUT STATUS TO VET



Beneficiaries

- Early leavers from education and training
- Learners at risk of early leaving from education and training
- Learners at transition points and/or uncertain about career aspirations
- Low-performing learners
- VET students (school-based learning)
- VET students (work-based learning)
- Migrants / refugees

Young people with higher levels of disengagement and those facing complex barriers to learning, can particularly benefit from mentoring and coaching. These supports are especially useful at transition points, such as the move from lower secondary education to VET, or the reintegration of learners returning after dropping out.

Addressing the problem

How can coaching and mentoring effectively prevent early leaving during transition points?

Coaching and mentoring involve one-to-one support for young people, but they are not the same. Coaching has clearly defined goals and objectives: it aims to improve performance, focusing on specific skills or targets and typically ends once these are achieved. Mentoring is broader, with evolving goals and objectives. According to the [Cedefop glossary](#), mentoring refers to “any support provided to a young person or novice by an experienced person who acts as a role model, guide, tutor, coach or confidante”.

Mentoring and coaching can achieve a range of outcomes depending on the needs of the young person and the characteristics of the mentor or coach (e.g. whether they are internal

or external to the learning provider, adults or peers, volunteers or paid staff). The relationship, activities and communication methods will vary according to the learner's needs.

The following tips provide practical guidance for policy-makers and practitioners designing and delivering these measures. The information is based on Cedefop research into successful practices.

Tip 1: Choose the right coach or mentor and provide training

Coaches/mentors may be professionals (e.g. guidance counsellors, teachers or tutors), volunteers (e.g. from the business community or students) or peers. An independent mentor - someone not affiliated with the learning provider or company (for apprentices/trainees) - can make it easier for the young person to discuss questions and difficulties openly. Similarly, peer mentoring connects learners with others who are independent of "the system" and may have experienced similar challenges. Peer mentoring can be particularly useful for addressing social or motivational issues, sharing learning experiences, and exchanging study techniques.

Training is essential for coaches and mentors before they begin working with young people. This is especially important for volunteers, such as students or community members.

Advanced tools, including those using artificial intelligence (AI) and smart algorithms, can support the matching of learners with coaches or mentors. These tools go beyond simple availability-based matching and can consider the coach's or mentor's academic and professional background, previous experiences, interests, hobbies, qualifications, and past coaching or mentoring experience to ensure an optimal fit with the learner's profile.

Tip 2: Build a relationship based on trust

Over time, the coach or mentor and the young person need to develop a relationship founded on trust. A key benefit of mentoring or coaching is that, through this relationship, the young person can receive advice and support from an adult who is often "external" to their learning and home environments, or who is perceived by the learner as neutral and supportive.

This positive relationship can be especially important for young people at risk of disengaging from learning. For some, the coach or mentor may be the only adult they feel is genuinely supporting them in their education and/or career.

Tip 3: Commit to goals and tailor activities to the young person

Mentoring and coaching can support a range of goals, and the activities involved should be tailored to the individual learner. The support should be led by the young person and their needs, meaning the activities undertaken with the coach or mentor can vary considerably and may evolve as the coaching or mentoring relationship develops.

For example, mentoring can help identify problems that might lead to drop-out, enabling the young person, with their mentor's guidance, to address these issues proactively. Mentoring can also empower learners to improve their learning habits, formulate future goals, and benefit from the experience of professionals. It may provide opportunities to discuss technical topics or practice for assessments.

Coaching may focus on developing a project or plan for the learner's future, identifying additional training or support needed to successfully complete their learning pathway. This is an individualised approach, tailored to the learner's specific needs. The coach may also advocate on behalf of the young person, helping to identify and address barriers beyond learning, such as health or welfare issues.

Shared digital spaces or mobile apps can facilitate co-creation and management of learning and career goals. Additionally, career and education planning tools, together with interactive digital platforms that present occupations and work environments vividly, can help inspire the learner. This approach makes goal-setting more realistic while aligning with the learner's interests and aspirations, as well as the practical realities of available learning and career options.

Tip 4: Offer long-term support

To build a relationship of trust, coaching and mentoring should take place over the long term rather than as a one-off session. The duration and intensity of the intervention should be adapted to the young person's needs, particularly for those facing complex barriers to learning, reflecting the specifics of their situation.

Digital technologies can help maintain ongoing connection between the mentor or coach and the learner, especially when the learner faces accessibility or other practical challenges.

Tip 5: Set clear expectations and boundaries

It is important to clarify roles, responsibilities, and communicate expectations at the outset of the coaching or mentoring process. Clear boundaries help establish mutual respect, ensure confidentiality, and prevent misunderstandings. Young people should understand what the coach or mentor can provide and the limits of their support, while mentors should receive guidance on professional conduct, safeguarding, and ethical considerations.

Tip 6: Monitor progress and adjust support

Regular monitoring of learner progress is essential to ensure that mentoring and coaching remain effective. Feedback sessions between the learner and coach, supported by digital tracking tools, can help identify emerging challenges early and adjust the support provided. This process allows for flexible adaptation of goals, activities, and intensity based on the learner's evolving needs.

Tip 7: Encourage reflection and self-directed learning

Mentoring and coaching should empower learners to reflect on their own learning habits, achievements, and challenges. Encouraging self-directed learning helps develop autonomy, resilience, and critical thinking skills, which are key to preventing early leaving. Reflection can be facilitated through digital portfolios, journals, or regular review meetings with the mentor.

Tip 8: Integrate career and labour market guidance

Mentoring and coaching should connect learning with real-world opportunities. By integrating [career guidance](#) and providing information on labour market trends, apprenticeships, and higher education options, learners can make informed choices about their future pathways. AI-enhanced career guidance tools can help map learners' interests to labour market data, supporting realistic and evidence-based decisions.

Tip 9: Foster peer support networks

In addition to one-to-one mentoring, peer networks can provide ongoing social and motivational support. Peer mentors can share experiences, learning strategies, and practical advice, helping learners feel part of a supportive community. This is particularly useful for learners at risk of isolation or disengagement.

💡 Tip 10: Involve parents and key adults where appropriate

Engaging parents or other key adults in the mentoring process can provide additional support outside the formal learning environment. Coordination between home, school, and mentoring activities ensures that learners receive consistent guidance and encouragement, particularly for those facing [complex personal or socio-economic barriers](#).

Expected outcomes

Mentoring and coaching alone cannot solve all the challenges faced by young people. However, the one-to-one relationship that develops through these interventions can be a crucial element of a broader, comprehensive support package. It provides learners with a positive role model, guidance on learning, opportunities to discuss and overcome personal and academic challenges, and an individualised response to their specific support needs.

Through mentoring and coaching, young people can improve social and communication skills, build resilience, and develop strategies to manage challenges in learning, work, and life. They may also experience positive behavioural changes, such as reduced absenteeism, improved engagement with their studies, and enhanced attainment outcomes. Overall, mentoring and coaching increase the likelihood that learners continue and complete their education, while preparing them for future careers and lifelong learning.

The expected outcomes can be categorised across three different levels:



 INDIVIDUAL	 INSTITUTIONAL	 SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved well-being, confidence, and resilience • Development of social, emotional, and communication skills • Enhanced capacity to manage personal, social, or psychological challenges • Improved work habits, study techniques, and self-management skills • Reduced absenteeism and disengagement from learning • Greater clarity in learning and career goals, including realistic long-term planning • Increased understanding of education and training options, including pathways back to learning for early leavers • Development of self-awareness, recognising personal abilities, aptitudes, and interests • Better understanding of job roles, workplace expectations, and 'work readiness' • Ability to make informed decisions about education, training, and career pathways • Enhanced autonomy and self-directed learning through reflection and goal-setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced risk of early leaving among students receiving mentoring or coaching support • Improved capacity of teachers and trainers to work with learners facing complex personal, social, or family issues • More effective goal-setting and learning plans through the use of digital tools, AI, and smart algorithms for matching learners with mentors/coaches • Development of positive school culture, including stronger relationships between staff and learners • Greater engagement of peer support networks and involvement of parents or key adults to reinforce learning and motivation • Enhanced career guidance integration, connecting learning to labour market opportunities and future pathways • Increased efficiency in monitoring, adjusting, and reflecting on learner progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced rates of early leaving among learners receiving mentoring or coaching support • Increased rates of young people returning to education or training after periods of disengagement • Higher rates of completion of upper secondary qualifications among learners receiving support • Enhanced system responsiveness to the needs of learners at risk, including flexible pathways and personalised support measures • Improved accessibility and equity through digital platforms that facilitate mentoring, monitoring, and career guidance • Stronger integration of mentoring/coaching services across education and employment sectors, promoting permeability between pathways • Overall improvement in public perception of vocational education and training (VET) as a supportive, inclusive, and flexible learning system

Related protective factors



Health and well-being



Positive future vision for oneself and positive career choices



Positive self-perception linked to learning ability

Related resources

Good practices

 Good practice

Youth Coaching Scheme

Jugendcoaching

In Austria, the Youth Coaching Scheme offers high quality coaching and input from other services to ensure participants are provided with support to meet their individual needs.

 **Austria**

 Good practice

VerA - Prevention of Training Dropout

Retired trained professionals volunteer their time and experience to support apprentices as part of a mentors scheme in Germany.

 **Germany**

 Good practice

Orianta4YEL

Supporting educational and social inclusion of young early leavers and those at risk of early leaving through mechanisms of orientation and tutorial action.

 **Germany**  **Portugal**  **Romania**

 **Spain**  **United Kingdom**

Tools

 Tools

Work Guidelines for EPIS mentors

The Entrepreneurs for social inclusion (EPIS) guidelines, offer support to mentors and educational staff who work with learners or groups of learners at risk, including psychologists, social workers, and other educational staff in school education. The guidelines include a 'how to do' list for intervening / providing individual support to learners and families.

 **Portugal**

 Tools

Guide for Roma school mediators/assistants

Involving Roma mediators in the school can serve as a powerful tool to facilitate relations between teachers, other school staff and parents of Roma children. This Guide for Roma school mediators/assistants provides a wide range of tools and practical guidelines that can be adapted to different contexts.

 **EU level International**

 Tools

DIDO - Dropping-in the dropouts toolkit

The DIDO toolkit contains practical tools aimed at preventing dropout in adult education.

 **Belgium**  **Denmark**  **Finland**

 **Netherlands**  **Portugal**

 **Switzerland**

Publications

 Publications

Invest in Talent

In the Netherlands, the 'Invest in Talent' initiative provides practical advice on how to bring together partners from the worlds of employment, education, housing, coaching and mentoring to offer support to young people in dealing with the challenges they face in everyday life.

Read the initiative [flyer description](#).

 **Netherlands**

 Publications

Evaluation of mentoring disaffected young people

An evaluation of the Mentoring Plus Programme in the UK examined the process by which vulnerable young people become involved in the programme. The study examines their experiences as well as the experiences of staff who work as volunteer mentors.

Read the report  [here](#).

 **United Kingdom**

 Publications

Natives and immigrants enrolled in Spanish intermediate vocational education and training: a comparative study

Antoni Cerdà-Navarro, Francesca Salvà-Mut, Rubén Comas-Forgas & Mercè Morey-López

This article looks at the differences and similarities between Spanish-born and immigrant students enrolled in the first year of Intermediate Vocational Education (IVET) programmes in Spain.

 **Spain**

 Publications

Pathways to School Success

Replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving

This Council Recommendation aims to provide a framework which serves as a reference tool for national, regional and local policy makers and practitioners in education and training which can inspire a systemic policy response to ensure better educational outcomes for all learners.

 **EU level**

 Publications

The untapped potential of disadvantaged young people for apprenticeships in skilled trades

ILO Working Paper exploring barriers and opportunities in apprenticeship completion and skilled trades integration

This ILO working paper explores why socially disadvantaged young people are more likely to drop out of apprenticeships in certain skilled trades, identifying factors linked to poor retention and limited employability.

International

Quick wins

★ Quick win

Create opportunities for informal interactions between students and VET provider staff

Creating opportunities for informal interactions between learners and staff can help build trust and create positive relationships.

 **Poland**  **Portugal**

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