



RIGHT TRACK PROJECT (2011
– 2013): A REAL-WORLD
STUDY USING THE MENTAL
TOUGHNESS MODEL AND
QUESTIONNAIRE TO
IMPROVE ATTAINMENT,
ATTENDANCE AND
BEHAVIOUR OF
DISADVANTAGED AND 'AT
RISK' YOUNG PEOPLE

BACKGROUND

The Right Track project was a UK initiative delivering bespoke packages of support to young people, including Mental Toughness assessments and coaching in order to improve attainment, attendance, behaviour and ultimately progression of the target cohort. The delivery partner, reachfor, collected baseline data for each goal in order to assess impact.

The UK Department for Education provided funding to reachfor for the Right Track project to address the Improving Outcomes Theme 6 priority: Early intervention to increase participation by, and improve the achievements of, disadvantaged young people.

The two-year project ended in March 2013 and was designed to cover 4,500 young people across the UK.

The Right Track programme targeted Years 6, 9, 10 and 11 pupils (and their families where appropriate) who met the following criteria:

- Young people receiving “School Action plus” support
- with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities
- with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders
- with long term workless parents
- in Care
- in PRUs (Pupil referral units)
- who are substance misusers
- who are at risk of becoming teenage parents
- underachieving males from White, Afro-Caribbean and Pakistani communities

The aim was to equip teachers and tutors to support the progression of participants, use feedback from young people, their schools, families and others to refine interventions and contribute to rigorous external evaluation to demonstrate impact.

HOW DID IT WORK?

The Right Track project was based on the use of the mental toughness model and the mental toughness questionnaire, MTQ48, for both diagnosis and for evaluation.

The programme had three components.

All participants were assessed using the MTQ48 measure. Each individual was provided with feedback and an individual action plan agreed.

All participants were provided with a programme of interventions designed to develop positive thinking, anxiety control, improved focus and attention and goal setting. The programme was delivered through weekly sessions over a 10-week period.

A variety of delivery options were used; one-to-one face to face; small group work and large group work. All programmes were supported with coaching activity.

Finally, the participants were re-assessed using the MTQ48 in order to explore to what extent mind-set had changed over the period of the programme and to correlate this with planned outcomes.

WHAT HAPPENED?

An overview of the programme was carried out by Get The Data.

This showed that:

- 49% of participants reported increased mental toughness sten scores. 23% reported lower scores than at outset. The average improvement across the whole cohort was in the order of 0.5 sten. This is significant.
- The proportion of participants who wanted to continue in full time education after year 11 increased from 17% to 28%
- The proportion of participants who felt that their teachers were “getting at them” fell from 40% to 29%
- The proportion of participants who reported enjoying being at school rose from 53% to 60%
- Attendance improved significantly for 73% of the cohort. The average improvement in attendance was 6.2%
- Teacher reports showed that 45% improved their behaviour and 46% improved their work in class
- The analysis suggested that face to face interventions were more effective than group interventions.

WHAT NEXT?

A more detailed analysis of the portion of the cohort delivered by GMCP, one of the key partners, showed some more interesting results. This was carried out under the supervision of Professor Peter Clough of Manchester Metropolitan University and Dr John Perry of Leeds Trinity University College.

This cohort of around 1000 young people showed an average increase in mental toughness of around 1 sten. The outcomes for this cohort were also largely better than the average for the whole project.

In addition to further and more in-depth quantitative analyses, there is a programme of qualitative analysis underway. This will seek to understand why the programme has been so successful and to introduce a longitudinal element – to assess the extent of impact 12 months after the end of the whole programme.