

June 2026

Mentors & Scholars Evaluation Report



The Longford Trust

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the Longford Trust Scholars and Mentors who generously took the time to participate in the survey. Your honest feedback, experiences, and insights formed the foundation of this report and have made it possible to produce a meaningful and evidence-based evaluation of the Trust's impact. Your contributions will help inform future improvements and support the continued success of the Longford Trust's programmes.

Author

Sania Shabbir, who writes: *'I was fortunate to receive support from The Longford Trust throughout my postgraduate studies, which enabled me to complete my MSc Business Computing with Distinction. Their belief in my potential, alongside the financial, professional, and personal support they provided, gave me the opportunity to achieve a goal that may not otherwise have been possible.'*

Introduction

This report presents the findings from surveys conducted in the spring and early summer of 2026 with mentors and scholars participating in programmes delivered by The Longford Trust. The Trust is a registered UK charity dedicated to supporting individuals with experience of the criminal justice system by enabling access to higher education and employment opportunities.

It has two programmes. The larger one, covered by this report, is its **Longford Scholarship** programme which supports award-holders throughout their time at university and beyond into graduate employment. The second, not covered by this report, is its **Frank Awards** scheme that funds around 25 Open University modules each year for serving prisoners too far off release to qualify for a student loan but wanting to start out on the higher education route while in prison as part of their preparation for release. Some Frank Award holders go on to become Longford Scholars.

The one-to-one mentoring is a key component of the Longford Scholarship programme, providing award-holders (referred to as scholars) with guidance, encouragement, and practical support as they navigate academic and professional pathways.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the experiences of both mentors and scholars involved in the Longford Scholarship programme, identify strengths within the programme, and highlight areas for development to the trust's team and trustees. By analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, this report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of mentoring relationships and the broader support offered by the Trust.

Methodology

34 Current Mentors

35 Current Longford Scholars

The survey was sent out to all current mentors and Longford scholars and participation was voluntary. The trust currently has over 80 mentors and the same number of Longford scholars. Data for this report was collected through two structured questionnaires:

- One distributed to mentors
- One distributed to scholars

The surveys included:

- Closed questions (quantitative data)
- Open-ended questions (qualitative insights)

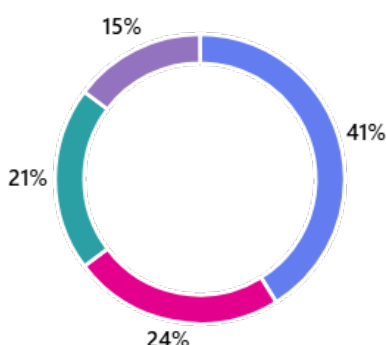
Responses were analysed using:

- Descriptive statistics for quantitative trends
- Thematic analysis for qualitative responses

Participant anonymity was maintained throughout the study to safeguard confidentiality and reduce the likelihood of response bias, thereby encouraging more honest and accurate feedback.

Mentor Survey Findings

Question 1: How long have you been a Longford Trust mentor?



The ranged which long-Mentors

out quickly and show strong commitment to being a mentor. The findings indicate that the mentoring programme is sustainable and valued by participants.

Up to 1 year	14
1 to 2 years	8
2 to 3 years	7
More than 3 years	5

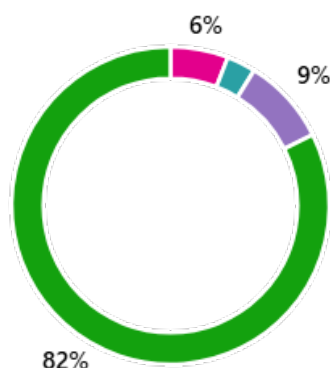
responses mainly around 1-3 years shows medium to term engagement. are not dropping

Question 2: Are you currently mentoring a scholar?

All participants answered 'Yes'.

There are a high participation rate and mentors who have completed the training are actively engaging in the mentoring programme.

Question 3: What is your age range?



82% of the age that and

18 - 24	0
25 - 34	2
35 - 44	1
45 - 54	3
55 +	28

mentors are over of 55, indicating mentors bring life professional experience to the programme.

However, it also highlights an opportunity for the Trust to encourage people from different age ranges to participate in the mentoring programme to make it more diverse and inclusive.

Question 4: Are you a university graduate?

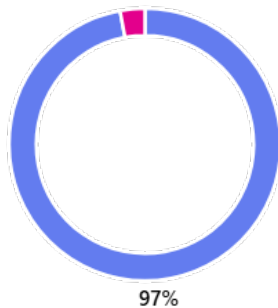
30 participants answered 'Yes', 4 participants answered 'No'.

This highlights that there is a strong academic background amongst mentors and mentors are well equipped to support educational journeys. It also shows that you do not need to be a graduate to be a mentor as there are mentors who are providing mentorship without having a graduate background.

Question 5: Did you attend mentor training?

All participants answered 'Yes', demonstrating a high compliance rate and structured onboarding. The statistics show that the training is consistent across the programme and all mentors are provided with training.

Question 6: Were you trained in a group or offered one-to-one training?



The majority of mentors were trained through group training making it an efficient method and scalable

Training Method	Count
Group Training	33
One-to-one training	1

How well did the training prepare you when you began mentoring? (Rate 1 -10)

This question was measured on a scale of 1 to 10 on how effective the training was in preparing mentors for mentoring scholars, 1 being least effective and 10 being highly effective. The responses were varied and the average score from all 34 responses was 7.74, which is on the higher end of the scale and confirms that the training has a practical impact. 12 out of 34 participants gave a rating of 8, showing that the training has been highly effective in preparing them for monitoring.

Question 8: What aspects of the training were most useful?

Responses to this question showed that the most valued aspects of the training included:

- **Real-life insights**
- **Relationship building skills**
- **Clarity around the mentoring role.**

Many respondents highlighted the importance in their training of hearing from current or former scholars as well understanding the boundaries of mentoring and having that role clarity. This showed that mentors need clear structure and ethical guidance to feel confident in their role. The biggest guidance for many mentors from this training was understanding from scholars present at the training what worked for them and what didn't work.

Question 9: What areas of the training could be improved?

Overall, responses to this question were highly positive, with many mentors indicating that they felt the training did not require significant improvement. 12 respondents gave answers such as "Nothing" and "None" or stated that no particular improvements came to mind. This suggests that a substantial proportion of mentors were satisfied with the quality and content of the training provided.

The most common theme related to the need for more **practical and scenario-based guidance**. 8 respondents highlighted the importance of additional role-play exercises, difficult case examples, communication strategies, or deeper discussion around real-life mentoring situations. This showed that mentors value practical preparation that would help them navigate the complexities of mentor-mentee relationships more confidently.

5 respondents highlighted the desire for **ongoing support and refresher training**, suggestions included follow-up sessions, yearly check-ins, webinars before being matched with scholars, and opportunities for mentors to reconnect and share experiences. These suggestions have been introduced by the trust in 2026.

5 respondents also identified the need for **greater clarity around the scope of the mentoring role**, boundaries, and reporting procedures. The responses highlighted uncertainty around professional limits, communication expectations, and safeguarding responsibilities within the mentoring relationship.

Smaller number of mentors emphasised the value of:

- Hearing more from scholars and experienced mentors
- Improving training materials or delivery environment
- Developing mentoring techniques and communication skills

Question 10: What have you learned as a mentor that could not be taught in training?

Mentors expressed that many of the most valuable mentoring skills are developed through real-life experience rather than formal training. The strongest theme was the importance of the following factors which were mentioned by 10 respondents:

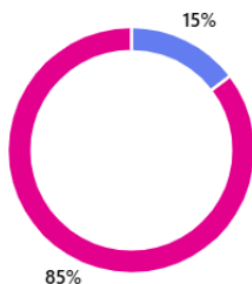
- Patience
- Flexibility
- Adaptability

Mentors frequently referred to the need to adjust to individual scholars' circumstances, communication styles, and levels of engagement.

Another significant theme highlighted by 8 respondents was the emotional and psychological challenges faced by scholars, particularly around release from prison, motivation, confidence, and relationship building. Mentors described gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and barriers scholars face, which could only truly be understood through direct interaction.

6 respondents highlighted the importance of listening skills and allowing the scholar to lead the relationship. Mentoring was less about giving advice and more about building trust, understanding individual needs and supporting scholars at their own pace. 5 respondents also discussed the importance of managing expectations, navigating boundaries, and responding appropriately to challenging situations.

Question 11: How often do you communicate with your mentee?



The
month
weekly

Weekly	5
Monthly	29
Yearly	0
Never	0

majority mentors
communicate with their
mentees at least once a
with 5 respondents having
communication.

Question 12: Rank the effectiveness of these communication methods (1 = least effective, 5 = most effective)

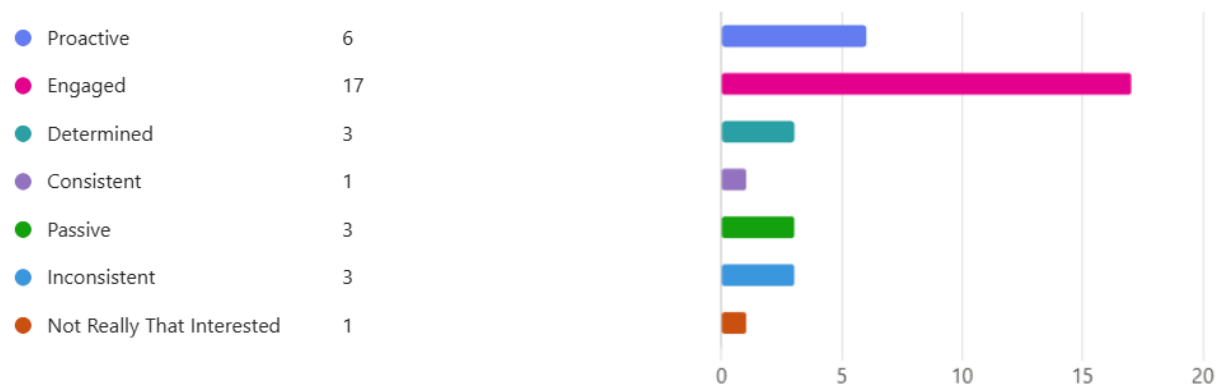
Rating	Face to Face	Virtual Meetings	Phone Calls	Email	Text
5 (Most effective)	23	10	8	9	13
4	8	9	8	9	10
3	2	6	7	5	3
2	1	4	5	6	5
1 (Least effective)	1	5	6	5	4
Total	34	34	34	34	34

The responses to this question showed clear differences in how mentors viewed the effectiveness of various communication methods. Overall, face-to-face communication was rated as the most effective method, with most respondents ranking it as either 4 or 5 out of 5. This suggests that mentors believe in-person interaction is the most valuable for building trust, rapport, and meaningful relationships with scholars.

Virtual meetings and phone calls received more mixed responses, although they were still generally viewed positively. These methods were commonly ranked between 3 and 5, indicating that while they are useful and practical alternatives, they may not provide the same level of personal connection as face-to-face meetings.

A key pattern across the findings is that mentors appear to value communication methods that allow for stronger personal interaction and relationship-building. The results suggest that more direct and personal forms of communication are perceived as more effective in supporting scholars.

Question 13: How would you describe your mentee's level of engagement during the mentoring relationship?



The most common response was “Engaged”, selected by 17 respondents, followed by “Proactive” with 6 responses. This indicates that many scholars were seen as actively participating in the mentoring process and willing to engage with support and guidance.

Some responses described their mentees as “Determined” and “Consistent” highlighting that some scholars demonstrated strong commitment and motivation despite challenges. These responses suggest that mentors recognised resilience and effort amongst mentees.

However, some responses indicate lower or fluctuating engagement levels. “Passive”, “Inconsistent” and “Not Really that Interested” were also selected by a total of 7 respondents. These findings suggest that engagement was not always straightforward and could vary depending on individual circumstances, communication styles, confidence levels, or external pressures faced by scholars.

Question 14: Do you believe being mentored has a measurable impact on your mentee's confidence or career readiness? Can you explain why or why not?

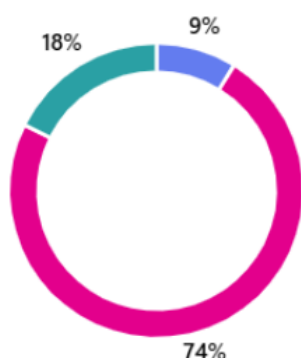
The responses to this question were positive, with 24 respondents expressing that mentoring had either a clear or likely positive impact on their mentee’s confidence, motivation, self-belief, or career readiness. Many mentors described mentoring as providing scholars with encouragement, reassurance, emotional support, and a non-judgmental space to discuss goals and challenges.

A particularly strong theme across the responses was the development of confidence and self-belief. 12 respondents referred specifically to scholars gaining confidence, recognising their strengths, or becoming more optimistic about employment and the future. Mentors frequently described acting as a “sounding board”, offering reassurance, encouragement, and validation that scholars may not have previously experienced.

Several respondents also highlighted the importance of mentoring in relation to career readiness and future planning. 8 respondents mentioned helping scholars clarify goals, prepare for employment, discuss career pathways, or feel more valued within their chosen field. 7 respondents stated that it was either “too early to say,” “difficult to assess,” or that their mentee was already highly motivated and independent. However, even within these responses, mentors often suggested that mentoring still provided additional encouragement, support, or reassurance.

Overall, the findings strongly suggest that mentors perceive mentoring as having a positive impact on scholars' confidence, emotional wellbeing, and career readiness.

15. Did you use the Mentors' App run by the Longford Trust?



16.

● Yes	3
● No	25
● Sometimes	6

**If no, why not?
(follow up of
question 15)**

A
said
and

all 25 was that they were not aware there was an app. This shows that there needs to be more communication and

majority of respondents they do not use the app the response after from

promotion of the app to strengthen and improve the engagement.

17. What have you gained from being a mentor?

The strongest themes across the responses from 15 respondents were the development of:

- **Empathy**
- **Understanding**
- **Perspective**

Mentors frequently described gaining a deeper understanding of the prison system, the barriers faced by scholars, and the realities of reintegration after custody. Several respondents reflected that the experience had challenged previous assumptions and broadened their perspectives on society and justice.

Another major theme, identified in 12 responses, was a **strong sense of purpose, fulfilment, and giving back to society**. Responses frequently referred to mentoring as a valuable way to contribute positively to society and use personal experience or skills to help others.

10 respondents also highlighted the **importance of human connection and relationship-building**. Mentors described forming genuine connections with scholars, learning from their experiences, and developing friendships based on trust and mutual respect. A further theme related to personal growth and self-development, with mentors mentioning increased compassion, improved communication skills, diplomacy, confidence, and emotional awareness.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentoring is viewed not only as beneficial for scholars, but also as a deeply rewarding and transformative experience for mentors themselves. The responses indicate that mentors gain emotional fulfilment, broadened perspectives, stronger interpersonal skills, and a greater sense of social contribution through the mentoring process.

18. What areas of the mentoring programme could be improved?

11 respondents stated that they could not identify any significant improvements required or that the programme was already working well. Responses such as “nothing” “can’t think of any” and “it seems well run” suggest a generally high level of satisfaction with the mentoring programme.

The strongest theme identified among suggested improvements was the desire for **more communication, networking, and peer interaction**, mentioned by 9 respondents. Mentors expressed interest in:

- More opportunities to meet other mentors and scholars
- Face-to-face or virtual meetups
- Regular check-ins
- Ongoing communication and updates from The Longford Trust

Another recurring theme, raised by 6 respondents, was the need for **additional training and follow-up support**. Suggestions included:

- Refresher sessions
- More extensive training
- More practical role-play and case studies
- Guidance on managing difficult or passive mentees
- Support with engagement techniques

5 respondents also referred to the need for **greater clarity and structure** within the programme, including:

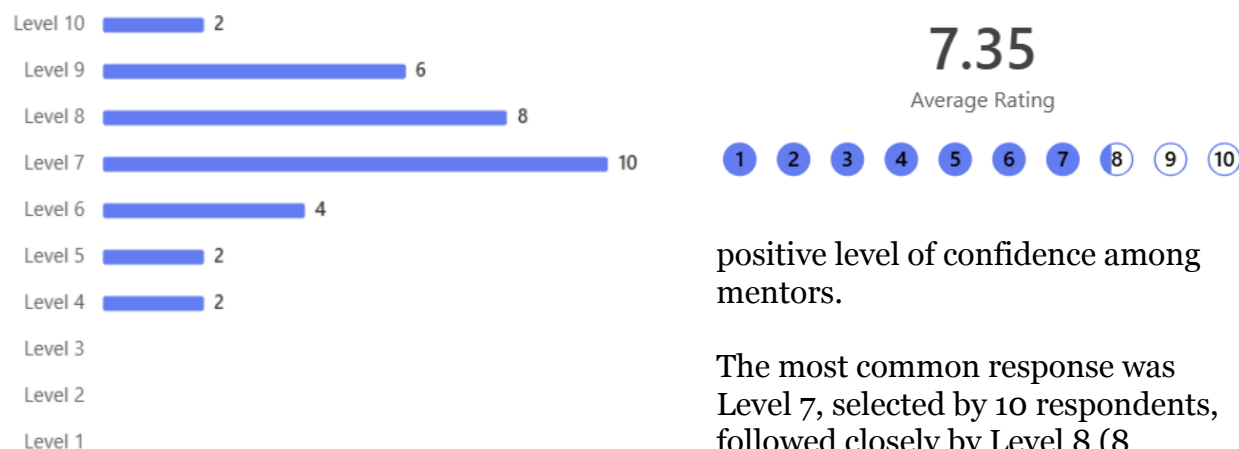
- Clarification of mentor support available through the Trust
- More structured meetings and reviews
- Improved matching between mentors and scholars

A smaller number of mentors suggested improvements related to:

- Employment and work support for scholars
- Regional meetups outside London
- Assessing mentor suitability over a longer period

19. How confident do you feel about addressing mentees' unique challenges, such as those related to their criminal records or social reintegration? (Rate 1–10)

The responses to this question indicate that mentors generally feel confident in supporting mentees with complex challenges related to reintegration, confidence, and criminal records. The average confidence rating was 7.35 out of 10, suggesting an overall



positive level of confidence among mentors.

The most common response was Level 7, selected by 10 respondents, followed closely by Level 8 (8 respondents) and Level 9 (6

respondents). In addition, 2 respondents rated their confidence at the maximum score of 10. This means that 26 out of 34 respondents rated their confidence between 7 and 10, demonstrating that most mentors feel reasonably well-equipped to support scholars with complex personal and social challenges.

Notably, there were no responses at Levels 1–3, suggesting that even mentors with lower confidence still felt somewhat capable in the role.

20. Would you recommend someone else to become a mentor with the Longford Trust? Why or why not?

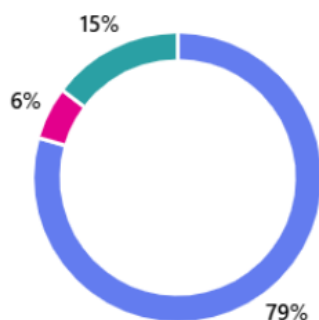
The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive, with all 34 respondents either directly stating “yes” or expressing strong support for recommending the mentoring programme to others. This demonstrates an exceptionally high level of satisfaction with the mentoring experience and with The Longford Trust as an organisation.

The strongest theme across the responses was that mentoring is a rewarding and fulfilling experience, mentioned by 15 respondents. Another major theme, highlighted by 10 respondents, was the belief that mentoring creates a positive social impact by supporting rehabilitation, reducing barriers, and improving life opportunities for scholars. Several mentors referred to mentoring as an opportunity to “make a difference,” “improve someone’s life,” and contribute positively to society.

7 respondents also emphasised the importance of human connection, empathy, and learning. Mentors described gaining insight into the experiences of others, bridging social divides, and learning through the mentoring relationship itself. Overall, the findings indicate extremely high mentor satisfaction and strong belief in the value of the programme. The responses suggest that mentors see the experience not only as beneficial for scholars, but also as personally enriching and socially meaningful.

21. Would you be interested in mentoring another scholar in the future?

The results from this question were positive as it showed that 27 respondents would be



Yes	27
No	2
Unsure	5

interested in mentoring another scholar in the future, showing that the programme is successful something mentors would continue to do.

22. why?

If Unsure, explain

The respondents who answered unsure said that they already have 2 scholars which is enough for them.

Other mentors stated that they are not sure they want the commitment, or that travelling to meetings is too much.

23. Are there specific resources, tools, or guides that would have made your mentoring experience more effective? If so, what are they?

Most mentors felt generally well-supported and did not identify a strong need for additional resources. 20 respondents stated that no additional tools or guides were needed, or that they could not think of anything specific that would improve their mentoring experience. Responses such as “No,” “Can’t think of any,” and “I’m happy with the resources I have” were common throughout the data.

However, several recurring themes emerged among the suggestions provided. 5 respondents expressed a desire for more ongoing training, structured guidance, or mentoring frameworks, including:

- Refresher training
- A mentoring “roadmap”
- Practical techniques and templates
- Guidance for managing mentoring relationships

A smaller number of respondents also requested:

- More information about prison systems and prison contacts
- Clearer details about support available through The Longford Trust
- Resources related to neurodiversity and learning needs
- Access to practical resources such as templates and contact lists

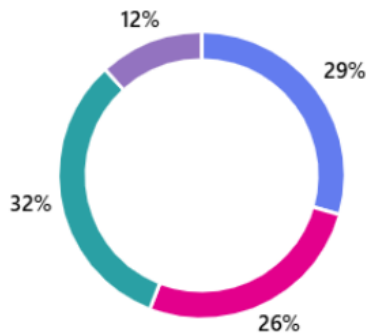
Several mentors additionally emphasised that direct access to Longford Trust staff was one of the most valuable existing resources, suggesting that responsive organisational support is already viewed positively.

24. What support from The Longford Trust has been most valuable to you?

The most identified form of support was **Training & Preparation**, mentioned by 11 respondents. This suggests that training is viewed as a key of the mentoring programme.

Responsive Personal Support	10
Regular Check-Ins & Communication	9
Training & Preparation	11
Too Early / Not Applicable	4

was suggests strength

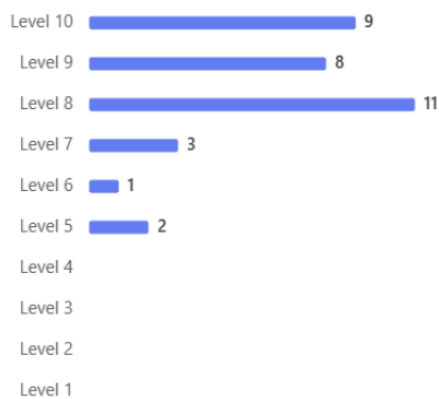


A similarly strong theme was **Regular Check-Ins & Communication**, identified by 10 respondents. Mentors valued ongoing contact, updates, and opportunities to communicate with the Trust throughout the mentoring relationship.

Another significant theme was **Responsive Personal Support**, mentioned by 9 respondents. Mentors appreciated being able to contact members of staff directly for advice, reassurance, or problem-solving support when needed.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentors value both the structured and relational aspects of support provided by The Longford Trust. Training, regular communication, and responsive staff support were all seen as important elements contributing to positive mentoring experiences and mentoring confidence.

25. How helpful was our mentoring manager in supporting you?



8.44

Average Rating

The



average rating was 8.44, with most respondents scoring support between 8 and 10 out of 10. Only a small number of respondents provided lower

ratings, with just 3 respondents rating the support at 5-6 out of 10.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentors felt well-supported by the mentoring manager and valued the guidance, responsiveness, and assistance provided throughout the mentoring process.

26. What positives have you experienced in your interactions with Longford Trust staff?

The most common themes were **responsiveness, helpfulness, friendliness, and encouragement**. 15 respondents specifically referred to staff being responsive, quick to reply, available, or efficient in dealing with queries and issues. Mentors value being able to access prompt support when needed, particularly during difficult situations or when seeking advice. 10 respondents highlighted the positive attitudes of staff, describing them as supportive, friendly, compassionate, knowledgeable, and non-judgmental. Several mentors also commented on the **enthusiasm and commitment shown by staff** towards the charity and mentoring programme.

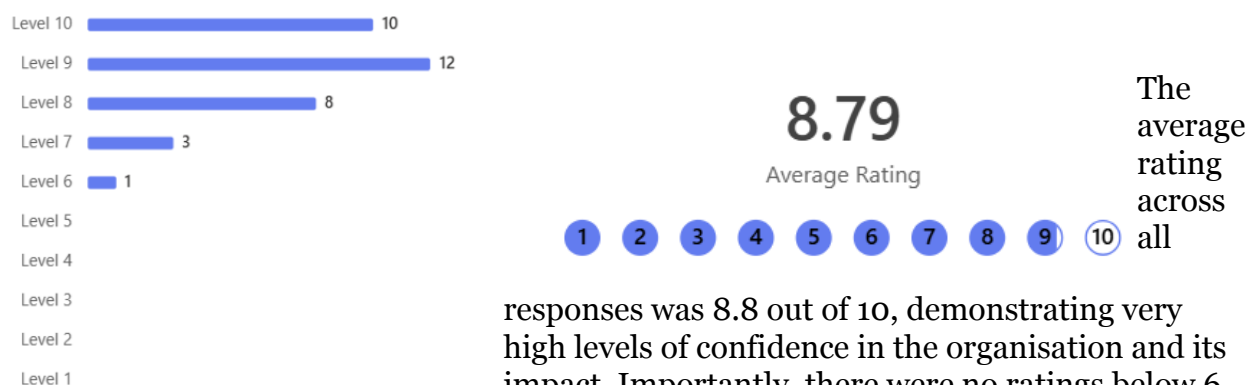
Another recurring theme was the sense that **staff genuinely care** about both mentors and scholars. Mentors appreciated the encouragement, reassurance, and practical support provided throughout the mentoring process.

27. Have you encountered any negatives in your interactions with Longford Trust staff?

The vast majority of mentors reported no negative experiences with Longford Trust staff, reflecting very high levels of satisfaction with staff support, communication, and responsiveness. Only a very small number of respondents identified minor concerns. One respondent referred to “unreliability,” without expanding further, while another mentioned that the time between check-ins could sometimes feel long. One mentor also noted feeling slightly “on my own” at the beginning of the mentor-scholar relationship, suggesting that additional early-stage support or contact may have been beneficial.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentors have highly positive experiences with Longford Trust staff and generally view the organisation as supportive, responsive, and reliable. The very limited negative feedback indicates that any concerns raised were relatively minor and focused mainly on communication frequency or early relationship support rather than broader organisational issues.

28. How effective do you think The Longford Trust is in fulfilling its mission?



reflected a generally positive perception of the organisation.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentors strongly believe in the value, purpose, and effectiveness of The Longford Trust. The consistently high ratings indicate confidence in the charity’s ability to support scholars, promote rehabilitation, and create positive social impact through education and mentoring.

29. And a final question to help us plan ahead at the trust: if we were given a large donation and told to spend it on offering a new type of support for our Longford scholars, what would you suggest we spent it on?

The responses to this question highlighted several clear priorities for future investment, with mentors focusing strongly on improving scholars’ long-term reintegration, wellbeing, and employment opportunities.

The strongest theme, mentioned by 10 respondents, was the need for **greater employment and career-readiness support**.

- CV writing and interview preparation
- LinkedIn and networking support
- Employment schemes and work opportunities
- Professional memberships and career development training

Another major theme, raised by 8 respondents, focused on **practical and financial support** for scholars. Suggestions included:

- Emergency bursaries
- Funding for books and laptops
- Housing support
- Financial wellbeing and budgeting support

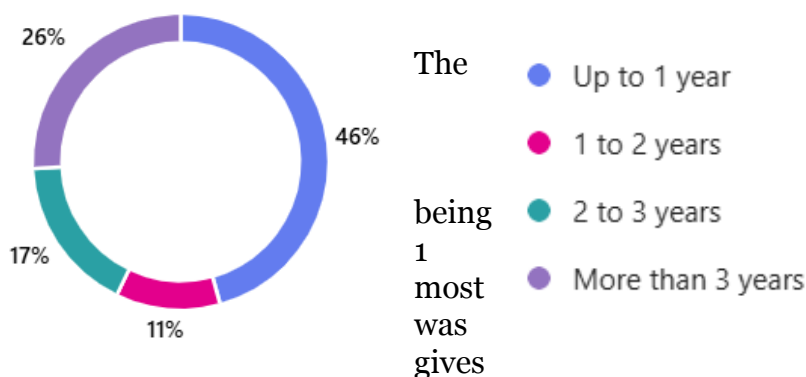
Several respondents also referred to:

- More support and training for mentors
- Increased access to educational opportunities
- Expanding the number of scholars supported by the Trust
- More regional opportunities outside London

Overall, the findings suggest that mentors believe future funding should prioritise holistic support that extends beyond education alone. Responses emphasised the importance of employment preparation, financial stability, emotional wellbeing, and community connection in helping scholars successfully rebuild their lives.

Scholar Survey Findings

1. How long have you been a Longford Scholar?



16 responses were varied with majority of respondents scholars for up to year. The second chosen response over 3 years. This a good overview

7 respondents also highlighted challenges linked directly to the prison experience and reintegration process, including:

- Limited internet access in prison
- Difficulty accessing study materials and technology
- Release from custody while studying
- Curfews and tagging restrictions
- Stigma and discriminatory procedures

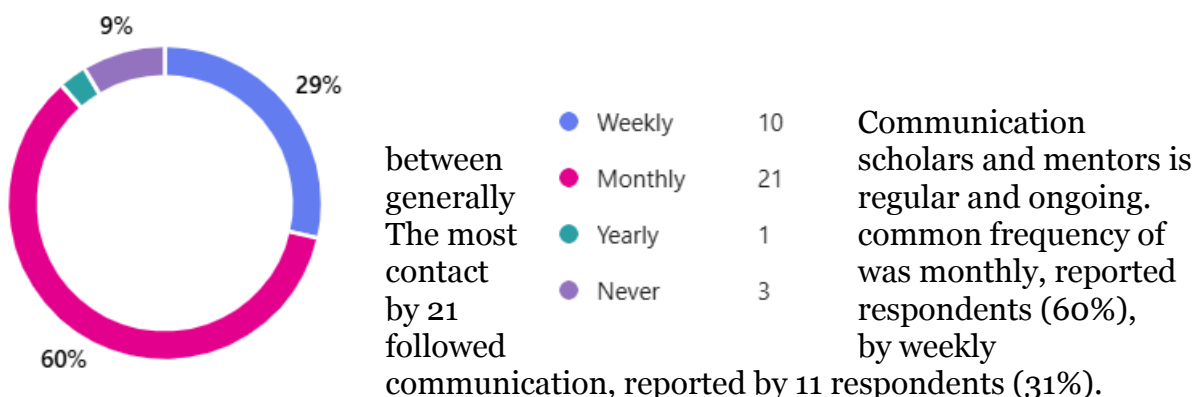
Scholars identified financial hardship, balancing life responsibilities, and adjusting to life during or after prison as the biggest challenges during university, highlighting the complex barriers many scholars face beyond academic study alone.

5. Were you paired with a Longford Trust mentor?

33 scholars (94%) reported that they had been paired with a mentor, while only 2 scholars (6%) indicated that they had not. This high proportion suggests that mentoring is a well-established and widely accessed component of The Longford Trust's support offer.

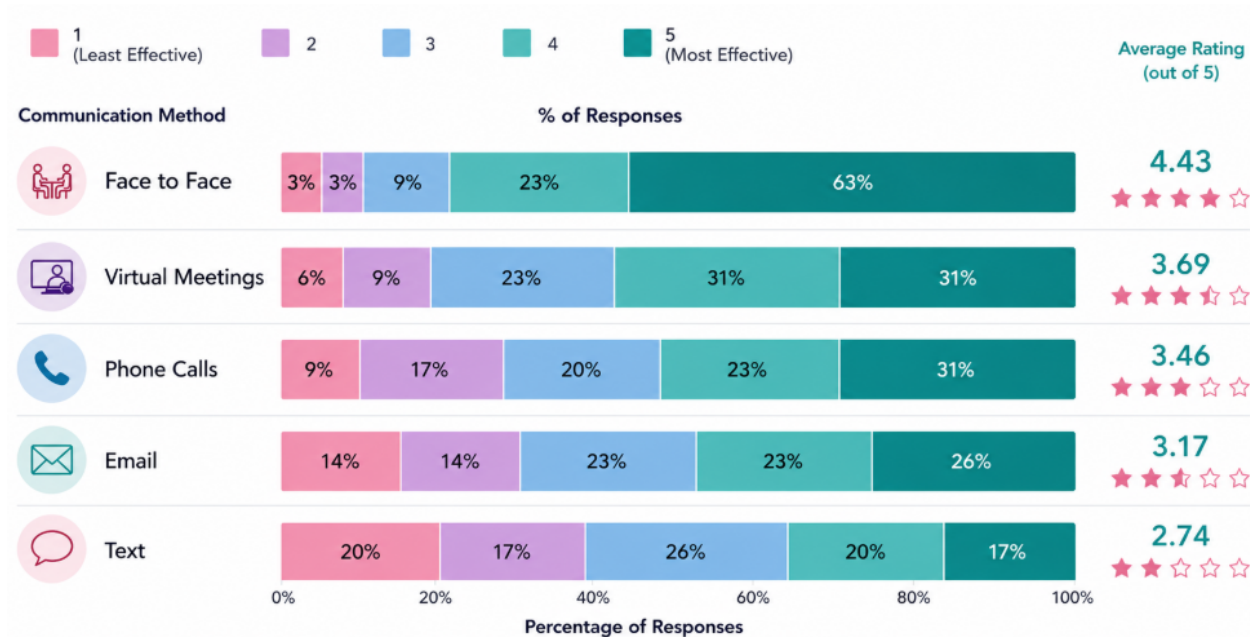
The findings indicate that most scholars have the opportunity to benefit from personalised guidance, encouragement, and support alongside their educational journey.

6. How often do you communicate with your mentor?



A small number of respondents reported having no communication with a mentor (3 respondents, 9%), while 1 respondent indicated that they communicate with their mentor yearly. Overall, the results demonstrate that the majority of scholars maintain regular contact with their mentors, providing ongoing opportunities for guidance, encouragement, and support throughout their educational journey. Also highlighting areas of improvement that may need to be made with those scholars who have limited communication.

7. Please rank the effectiveness of each communication method (1 = least effective, 5 = most effective)



The results indicate that scholars strongly favour face-to-face communication as the most effective method of engaging with their mentors. Across all responses, face-to-face meetings received the highest average ratings, suggesting that scholars value personal interaction, relationship building, and direct support.

The findings also show that phone calls, virtual meetings, and email were generally viewed positively, with many scholars rating these methods as effective alternatives when face-to-face contact is not possible. These communication methods appear to provide flexibility while still enabling meaningful mentor support. Text messaging received more mixed ratings. While some scholars found it highly effective for maintaining contact and arranging meetings, others viewed it as less useful for deeper conversations and mentoring discussions.

8. Describe the benefits you have gained from being mentored.

The responses highlight four main benefits of mentoring:

- **Emotional support and encouragement** (12 responses): Many scholars value having someone they could talk to, trust, and turn to for guidance during difficult periods.
- **Increased confidence and motivation** (7 responses): Mentors helped scholars build self-belief, stay focused, and remain motivated in their studies and future goals.
- **Academic and career guidance** (8 responses): Scholars appreciated receiving advice from experienced professionals, particularly in relation to their studies, career planning, and employment opportunities.
- **Accountability and practical support** (5 responses): Mentors helped scholars stay on track, overcome challenges, and achieve their objectives.

9. What could be improved in the mentoring programme?

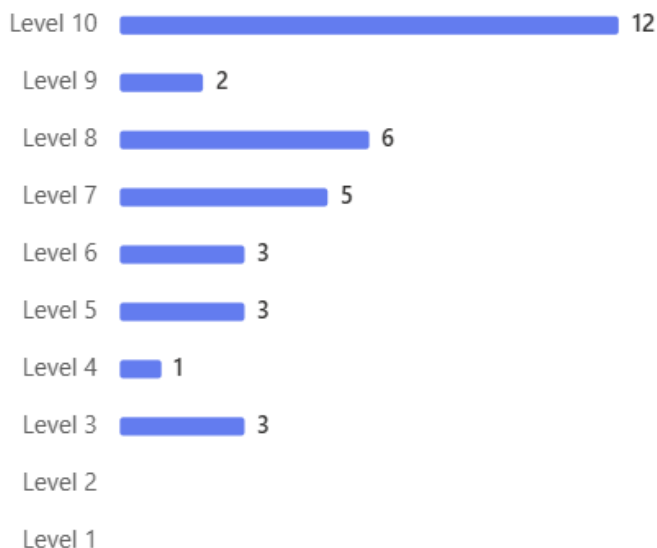
The majority of respondents were highly positive about the mentoring programme, with 18 respondents stating that nothing needed improving, that they were satisfied with their mentor, or that the programme was working well.

Among those who suggested improvements, the main themes were:

- **More communication and contact** (4 responses): Some scholars would like more frequent interaction with their mentor.
- **More networking and group events** (5 responses): Suggestions included mentor-mentee events, group gatherings, and opportunities for scholars and mentors to meet collectively.
- **Improved mentor matching** (3 responses): A small number of scholars felt mentoring could be more effective if mentors were better aligned with scholars' career interests, subject areas, or personal needs.
- **Greater accessibility** (2 responses): Some scholars noted challenges around distance and scheduling face-to-face meetings.

10. Do you feel your mentor pairing helped you in your university studies?

The most common rating was 10/10, given by 12 respondents (34%), indicating that many scholars felt their mentor had made a significant contribution to their academic journey.



Overall, 29 out of 35 respondents (83%) rated the impact of their mentor at 6 or above, suggesting that the majority found the mentoring relationship beneficial to their studies. High ratings suggest that mentors provide valuable support, guidance, motivation, and encouragement throughout scholars' academic journeys.

11. What support have you found most useful given by the Longford Trust?

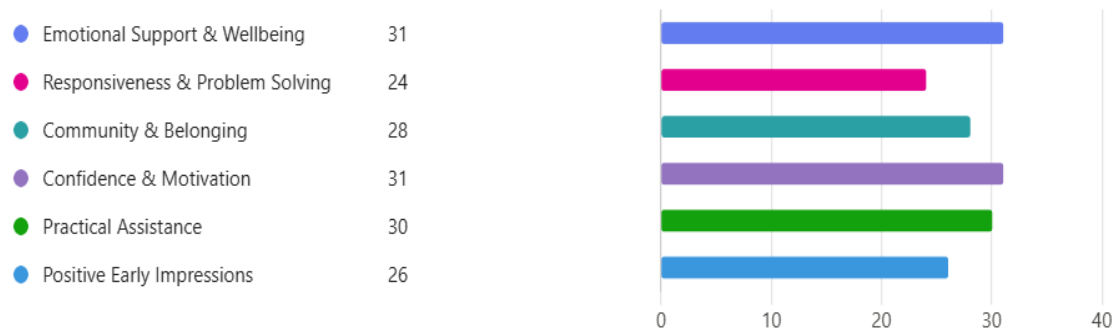
The most frequently mentioned form of support was **financial assistance**, highlighted by 24 respondents. Scholars referred to bursaries, funding, laptops, study equipment, graduation costs, and emergency financial support as being essential in enabling them to continue their studies and reduce financial pressures.

The second strongest theme was **mentoring and personal guidance**, mentioned by 15 respondents. Scholars valued having someone to provide encouragement, advice, accountability, and emotional support throughout their educational journey.

Several respondents also highlighted the importance of **employment and networking opportunities**, including careers support, ambassador opportunities, webinars, networking events, and connections with employers.

A smaller number of scholars referred to the wider sense of **community, pastoral support, and wellbeing support** provided by the Trust, describing the organisation as helping them build confidence, feel supported, and believe in their future.

12. What positives have you experienced in your interactions with Longford Trust team? (select all that apply)



The findings show very positive experiences of Longford Trust staff among scholars. The most reported benefits were Emotional Support & Wellbeing and Confidence & Motivation (89% each), followed closely by Practical Assistance (86%). A large majority also valued the sense of Community & Belonging (80%) and Positive Early Impressions (74%).

Overall, the results suggest that scholars see the Longford Trust team as supportive, encouraging, and approachable. The Trust appears to play an important role not only in providing practical help but also in building confidence, well-being, and a sense of connection throughout scholars' educational journeys.

13. Have you encountered any negatives in your interactions with Longford Trust team?

31 out of 35 respondents (89%) reported no negative experiences in their interactions with Longford Trust staff. Only a small number of respondents identified areas for improvement. These included a delay in being matched with a mentor, a perception that some activities and opportunities are London-centric.

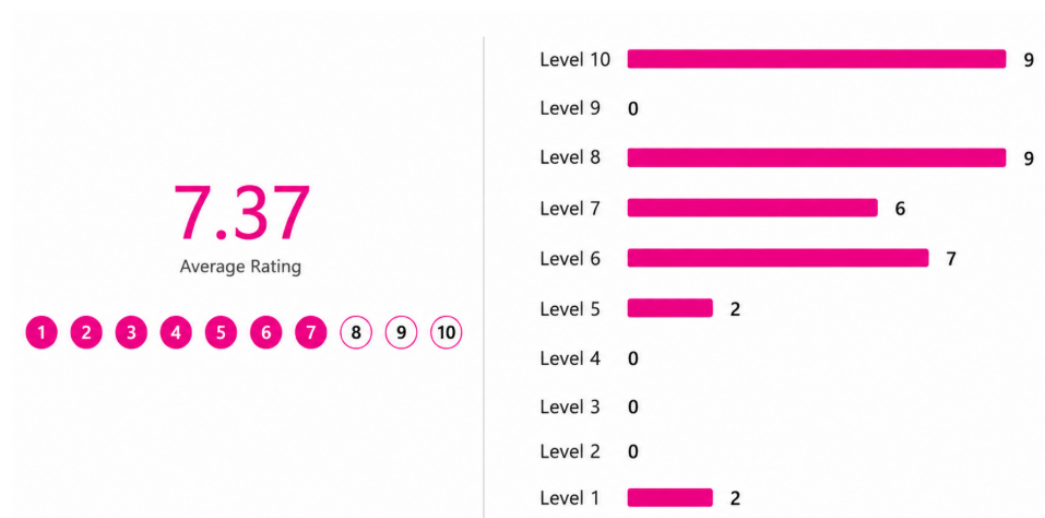
14. Do you receive the trust's monthly bulletins by email?

All respondents said Yes apart from 1 who answered No.

15. Are you on the scholars WhatsApp group?

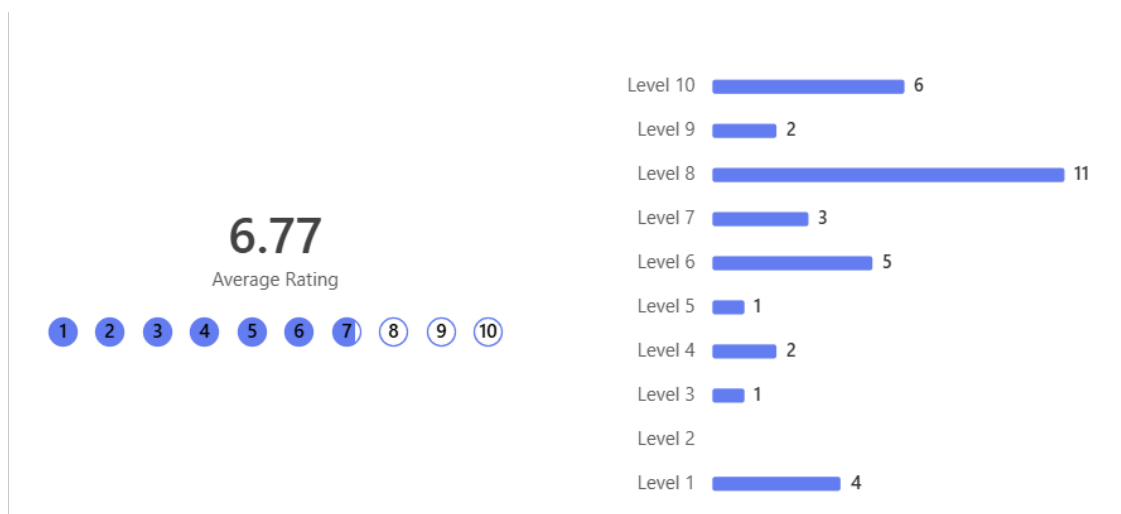
Majority of respondents said Yes (89%), 2 said No (6%) and 2 said No but they would want to be. This shows that communication can be improved and the Trust need to focus on making sure everyone is including in the communication channels.

16. How useful do you find the bulletins?



The findings suggest that the bulletins are generally considered a useful source of information and support for scholars. The strong concentration of ratings between 7 and 10 indicates that most respondents find value in the updates and communications provided. However, the small number of low ratings suggests there may be opportunities to further improve the relevance or engagement of bulletin content for some scholars.

17. How useful is the WhatsApp feed?



Scholars generally viewed the WhatsApp feed positively, with an average usefulness rating of 6.77 out of 10. The most frequently selected score was 8, chosen by 31% of respondents, indicating that many scholars find the feed a valuable source of information and support. Nearly two-thirds of respondents rated the feed between 6 and 10, suggesting overall positive perceptions. However, one in five respondents provided ratings between 1 and 4, highlighting opportunities to improve the relevance and usefulness of content for some scholars.

18. How could the bulletins or WhatsApp group be improved?

Overall satisfaction was high, 25 respondents were either satisfied with the current bulletins and WhatsApp group, unsure what improvements were needed or felt unable to comment.

The most common suggestions for improvement were:

- Providing **more targeted content**, particularly job opportunities and subject-specific events.
- Increasing the **frequency and consistency of updates**.
- Improving **privacy and group management**, including clearer rules and protecting members' contact details.
- Creating more opportunities for **peer connection and support**, including in-person events.

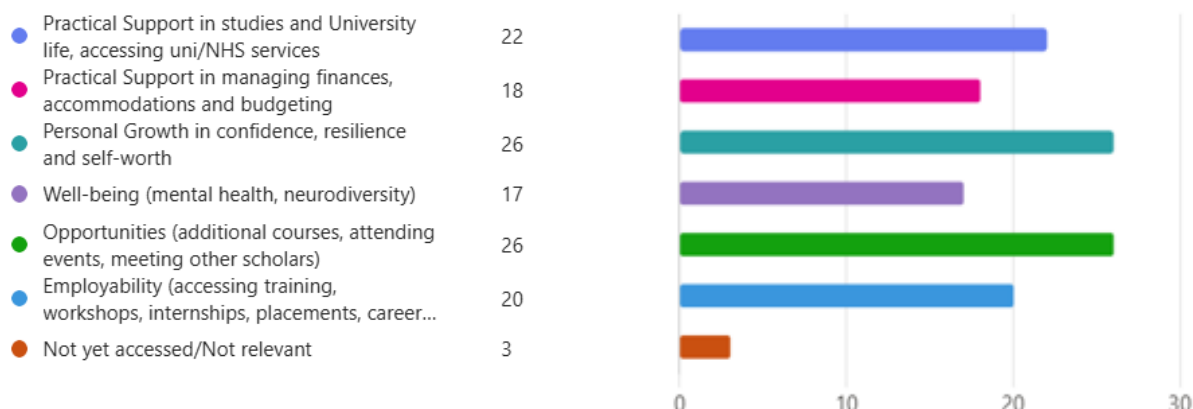
19. How effective do you think the Longford Trust has been in helping you change your life?

The Longford Trust was perceived as having a highly positive impact on scholars' lives, with respondents giving an average effectiveness rating of 9.14 out of 10. More than half of respondents (57%) awarded the highest possible score of 10, while 91% rated the Trust between 8 and 10. Only a small number of respondents provided ratings below 8, and none rated the Trust lower than 6.

These findings indicate that scholars view the Longford Trust as highly effective in supporting positive life change. The consistently high ratings suggest that the Trust's

educational, mentoring, and personal development support has made a meaningful difference to participants' lives and future opportunities.

20. How has the Longford Trust helped you overcome barriers related to your criminal record or past?



(Select all that apply)

The findings suggest that the Longford Trust supports scholars in overcoming barriers related to their criminal record or past in a variety of ways, with the greatest impact reported in personal growth and access to opportunities. The most selected forms of support were personal growth in confidence, resilience and self-worth (26 responses) and opportunities such as additional courses, events and networking with other scholars (26 responses).

Practical support was also highly valued, with 22 respondents reporting support in their studies, university life, and accessing services, while 20 respondents identified support with employability, including training, workshops, internships and career development. Support with managing finances, accommodation and budgeting was selected by 18 respondents, and 17 respondents reported benefits relating to well-being, including mental health and neurodiversity support.

Overall, the results indicate that the Longford Trust's impact extends beyond educational support, helping scholars build confidence, access opportunities, improve employability, and address practical and personal challenges that may arise from their criminal record or past experiences. Only three respondents indicated that they had not yet accessed these forms of support or did not consider them relevant.

21. Have you accessed any additional services or support outside the Longford Trust because of their referral or guidance? If yes, please specify.

The responses suggest that while many scholars had not accessed additional services outside the Longford Trust, the Trust has played an important role in connecting some individuals to external sources of support and development opportunities. The majority of respondents reported that they had either not accessed additional services, had not yet needed them, or were yet to do so.

Among those who had received referrals or guidance, the most mentioned opportunity was the Project ReMAKE programme, which several respondents accessed to gain qualifications and further development opportunities. Other forms of support included access to legal advice and solicitor support, counselling services, referrals to external organisations such as Unlock, and guidance towards exhibitions, courses, and professional development opportunities.

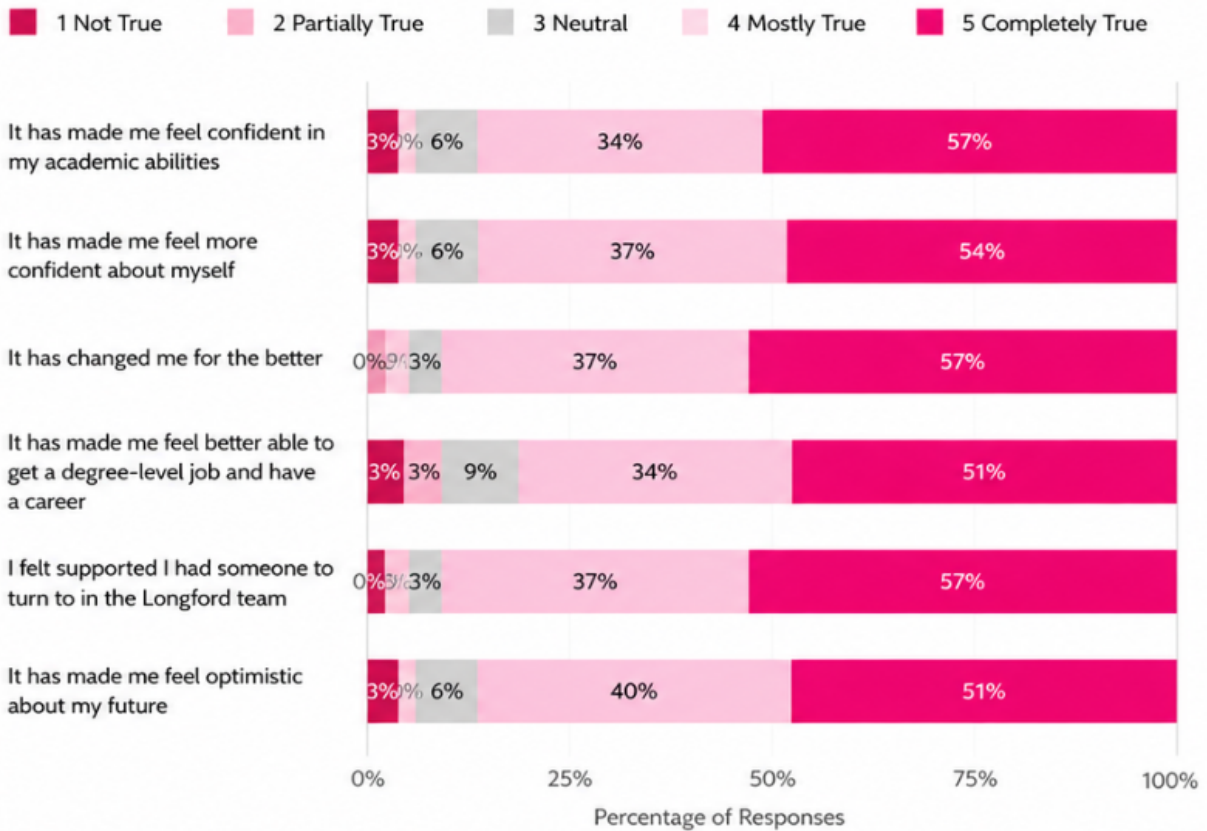
22. What specific skills or knowledge have you gained through Longford Trust activities that you did not have before?

Participation in Longford Trust activities has contributed to the development of both practical and personal capabilities among scholars. A recurring theme was increased **self-confidence**, with respondents describing **greater belief in their abilities**, improved communication skills, and a stronger willingness to engage in professional and academic environments.

Several scholars identified gains in **career-related competencies**, including CV writing, interview preparation, networking, leadership, mentoring, and public speaking. Others highlighted acquiring specialist knowledge, such as understanding financial barriers, navigating professional sectors, and accessing opportunities within their chosen fields.

The value of mentoring emerged strongly within the responses, with scholars noting that **guidance and encouragement** had helped them develop new ways of thinking, improve their problem-solving abilities, and build greater independence. Some participants also described broader personal outcomes, including **overcoming imposter syndrome**, moving beyond the stigma of their past, and maintaining positive life trajectories.

23. Please rate the following statements about your time as a Longford Scholar (1 = not true, 5 = completely true)

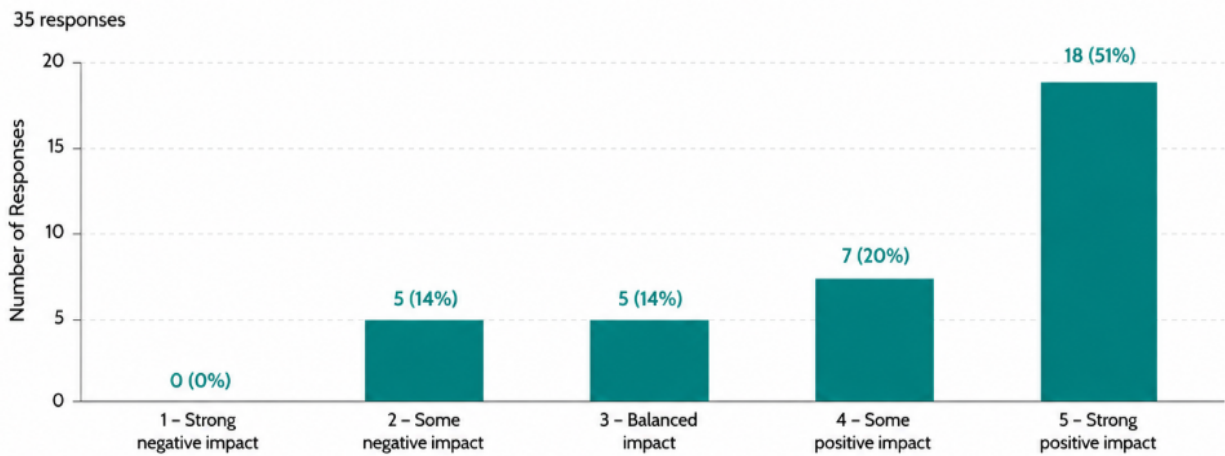


Responses were positive across all six statements. Between 86% and 94% of scholars selected 4 (Mostly True) or 5 (Completely True), indicating that the Longford Trust has had a significant positive impact on their confidence, personal development, and future aspirations.

The strongest areas of agreement were that the programme has changed them for the better and that they felt supported by the Longford Trust team, with 94% positive responses for both statements. Confidence in academic ability, self-confidence, and optimism about the future also received very high levels of agreement (91%).

The statement receiving the lowest (still very positive) level of agreement was that the programme improved confidence in securing a degree-level job or career (86%)

24. Thinking about both your past circumstances and your achievements, how do you feel these will impact your future career overall?



- 18 (51%) respondents believe their achievements will have a strong positive impact on their future career, with 7 (20%) stating some positive impact
- 5 (14%) feel their past challenges and achievements will have a balanced influence on their future career.
- 5 (14%) believe their past circumstances may still affect their opportunities, even though they are building positive achievements.
- No respondents feel their past circumstances would have a strong negative impact on their future career.

25. What Employability courses or workshops have you participated in through The Longford Trust?

Responses to this question indicate different levels of engagement with the Longford Trust's employability programme. While 15 respondents reported that they had not yet participated in any employability courses or workshops, 20 respondents had engaged in at least one course or workshop, which highlighted a diverse range of opportunities designed to support career development and progression.

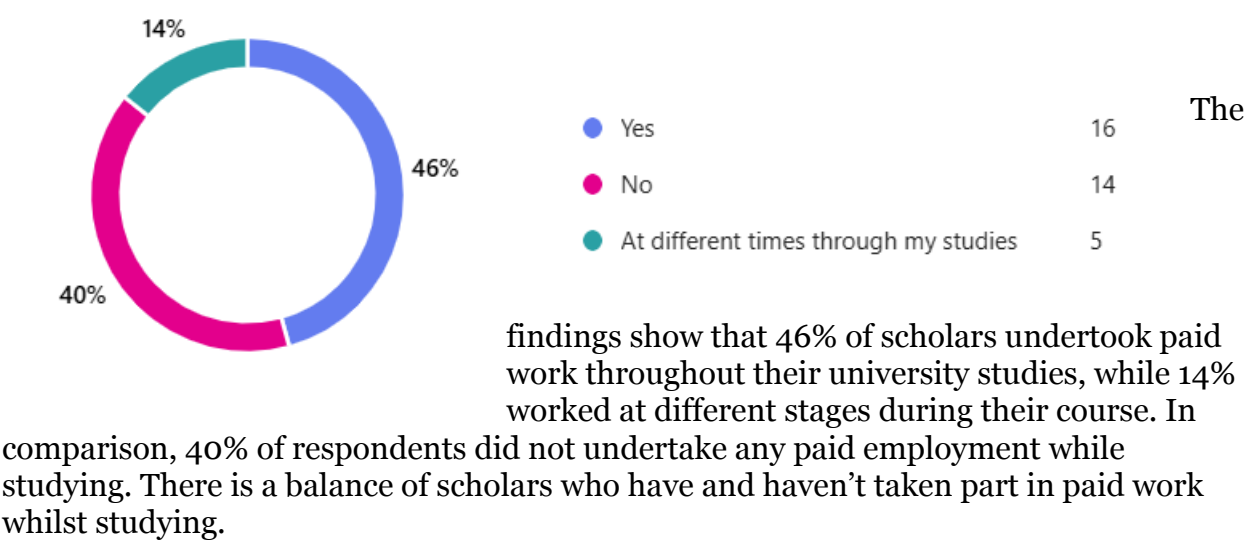
The most frequently mentioned activities included workshops on **disclosure of criminal convictions, CV writing, artificial intelligence (AI), and networking skills**. Respondents also referred to attending employer-led events and insight days, particularly those delivered in partnership with organisations such as AtkinsRéalis, as well as webinars focused on issues affecting people with criminal records. A small number of participants had completed specialist qualifications or reported taking part in multiple employability activities.

15 respondents (43%) had not yet attended any courses, indicate scope for future engagement as scholars progress through their studies and career planning as they may still be early in their scholarship.

26. Have you completed any internships or work placements through the Longford Trust?

33 scholars out of the 35 had not completed an internship or work placement through the Longford Trust. Only 2 reported having completed an internship or work placement. This may indicate an opportunity to expand awareness, availability, or access to work placement opportunities as scholars progress through their studies and prepare for employment.

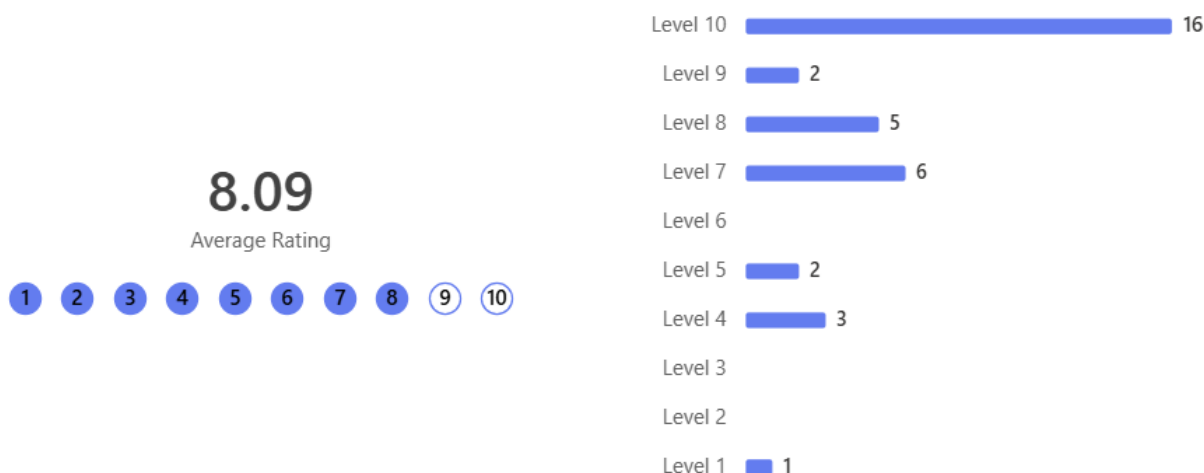
27. Did you take paid work while studying at university?



28. How confident did you feel about disclosing your past before becoming a scholar?



29. How confident do you feel about disclosing your past now?



A comparison of scholars' confidence in disclosing their past before and after becoming a Longford Scholar demonstrates a substantial positive shift. Before joining the programme, scholars reported relatively low confidence, with an average score of 4.83 out of 10. Responses were concentrated at the lower end of the scale, with many rating their confidence between 1 and 3, suggesting that many initially felt anxious or uncomfortable discussing their past.

Current confidence levels have increased significantly, with the average rating rising to 8.09 out of 10. 29 scholars now rate their confidence between 7 and 10. This shows that the Longford Trust Scholarship has several benefits such as gaining self-confidence, acceptance and empowerment, enabling scholars to feel more comfortable discussing their experiences and recognising their achievements.

30. And a final question to help us plan ahead at the trust: if we were given a large donation and told to spend it on offering a new type of support for our Longford scholars, what would you suggest we spent it on?

The most common recommendation was to invest in career and employability support, mentioned by 9 participants. Suggestions included work placements, graduate opportunities, stronger employer partnerships, postgraduate funding, business start-up support, and workshops to improve employability.

A further 8 participants highlighted the need for greater financial support, recommending increased bursaries, funding for postgraduate study, travel assistance, and help to overcome financial barriers to education and career progression.

Building a stronger scholar community was also a key theme, with 6 participants suggesting more face-to-face events, networking opportunities, workshops, and social activities to help scholars connect and support one another.

5 participants recommended expanding wellbeing and personal development support, including mental health services, life skills training, family support, digital skills, and neurodiversity programmes.

Overall, the responses suggest that scholars would prioritise investment in support that strengthens career outcomes, reduces financial barriers, improves wellbeing, and creates more opportunities to build relationships and professional networks.

Conclusion

The findings from this research demonstrate that the Longford Trust is making a meaningful and lasting difference to the lives of both scholars and mentors. Across almost every area of the survey, respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they receive and recognised the Trust's role in helping individuals overcome barriers associated with higher education, employment and previous convictions.

For scholars, the Trust provides far more than financial assistance. The combination of mentoring, practical support, employability opportunities and a strong sense of community has helped participants build confidence, develop new skills and feel more optimistic about their future. One of the most significant findings was the substantial increase in scholars' confidence to disclose their past, highlighting the Trust's role in promoting personal growth, resilience and self-belief.

Mentors reported positive experiences, valuing the training, guidance and ongoing support provided by the organisation. Their responses demonstrate a strong belief in the Trust's mission and the positive impact mentoring has on scholars' educational and personal development.

The evaluation provides strong evidence that the Longford Trust is successfully fulfilling its mission of supporting individuals with experience of the criminal justice system to access higher education, develop confidence, and build positive futures. The findings suggest that the Trust is creating meaningful educational, personal and social outcomes that extend well beyond the duration of the scholarship itself.