



## **Foróige’s College Mentoring Programme**

### **Submission to the National Access Plan 2022-2026**

**The Case-** Foróige’s College Mentoring Programme is an innovative approach to empowering disadvantaged vulnerable students to experience a more connected and successful college experience through creating supportive mentoring friendships in their college campus.

Foróige recommends that mentoring should be prioritised and structured in the National Access Plan 2022-2026.

Foróige believes that this can be achieved by providing a high quality national college mentoring programme to students, in all higher level institutions, linked to their Access Programme. Facilitated through a partnership between Foróige and the higher level institution, Foróige staff will service each cluster by training college staff to coordinate and implement the mentoring programme, building the capacity of the higher level institutions to sustain the programme going forward.

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, highlights five priority goals to be delivered between 2015 and 2019. Mentoring is detailed under Goal 5: To develop regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education with a particular focus on mentoring.

A report from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2018 showed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely to drop out of college after their first year. Another report from the HEA in 2020 showed that only 10% of college students are from disadvantaged areas. Research has shown college focused mentoring positively impacts low income students confidence to succeed in college and their college application efficacy (O’Sullivan et al., 2017)

A recent international study on faculty student mentoring in higher education has shown supportive mentoring relationships have an influential effect on college students’ academic success and overall development. It also highlighted that more incentives should be in place for faculty to engage in mentoring relationships with students. (Raposa et al., 2021)

**The Foróige Organisation-** Foróige is a youth development organisation with nearly 70 years' experience in working with young people in Ireland. Foróige has been operating the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) mentoring programme since 2001. BBBS is an internationally renowned youth mentoring programme whereby a vulnerable young person is supported by matching them with a caring, supportive adult friend.

**The Evidence** - BBBS is one of the most evaluated youth work models in the world. In addition to Irish research, there is a significant body of international research on the impact and effectiveness of BBBS, including a recent SROI study carried out in Canada by Boston Consulting that concluded an 18:1 return on investment (*Boston Consulting Group, 2019*). There have been 8 evaluations carried out on the BBBS programme in Ireland alone.

BBBS is the only youth programme in Ireland to have undergone a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) study. The statistically significant outcomes from the RCT include;

- Young people with a mentor were more hopeful and had a greater sense of efficacy in relation to the future than those without a mentor.
- Young people with a mentor felt better supported overall than those without a mentor.
- There were positive findings in relation to social acceptance, school liking, plans for school and college completion, and reduced drug and alcohol use.
- There were also positive findings in relation to misconduct and scholastic efficacy.

**Foróige's College Mentoring Programme** - In 2019, Foróige partnered with Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) to design a college mentoring programme to support vulnerable students in their first year in college. The students targeted were identified as needing additional support and all students were in receipt of the Access Scholarship and/or the 1916 Bursary. The college mentoring programme was developed by the partners based on the BBBS model of best practice in youth work provision. This manualised programme has procedures for recruitment of mentees and mentors, training of mentors and the supervision of matches.

**College Mentoring Pilot Research** - The programme was piloted during the academic year 2019/2020, with 15 mentors and 15 mentees. GMIT carried out research to explore the process and outcomes of implementing Foróige's College Mentoring Programme within a higher education institution. A mixed methods approach, involving a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, was utilised in the research.

The main highlights from the research are as follows;

- Students felt supported throughout their first year in college.
- Students benefited from having someone they could talk to.
- The programme helped students to know the other supports that were available to them in the college.
- Students felt the application process assisted them to be matched to a Mentor who was most suited to them.
- The mentoring relationship built the students confidence in college life.
- The mentoring relationship had a positive impact on the student's emotional wellbeing.

Testimonials from the Pilot Study:

"The programme was great in helping me adapt to college life, understanding time management/study plans and gaining confidence by having moral support". - GMIT Mentee

"I was more confident about being in college and was able to achieve my goals, with the support of my Mentor." - GMIT Mentee

"This programme helped me to improve my empathy skills and communication skills." - GMIT Mentor

"The programme showed me how to make someone at ease and encourage them to be confident in speaking about themselves."- GMIT Mentor

**Innovation-** Foróige's College Mentoring Programme is an innovative approach to empowering disadvantaged students to participate in, and influence the direction of their own college lives. Voluntary participation in the programme enables them to have a more connected and rewarding experience of their first year in college. It is a collaborative response to a gap in support for students, from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have transitioned into college. It is different to other college mentoring programmes, as the majority of these are peer to peer or academic mentoring.

This programme is a friendship intervention. The main role of the mentor is to support, guide and become a friend to the mentee. The programme offers existing college staff the opportunity to mentor, harnessing college resources and local knowledge to respond to their college needs and support their own students.

**Scaling the Programme Nationally through Partnership** - The programme is easily scalable. It is a manualised programme that can be packaged and rolled out efficiently and effectively in any higher level institution.

The programme is facilitated through a partnership with Foróige staff and Access staff in the higher level institution. It offers professional training and support to college co-ordinators and training, support and supervision to student mentees and mentors.

Foróige sees a pathway that could make it possible for vulnerable first year students to have the opportunity to be involved in a positive mentoring relationship, should they want or need to.

**Sustainability** - The national programme will be implemented over a period of three years. Professional Foróige staff will train and support college staff coordinators to implement the programme in their individual higher level institution. After three years, all college staff coordinators will be trained and will be in a position to sustain the programme internally.

**Cost of Expansion** - This programme is a low cost intervention. It is a volunteer led approach to achieving positive outcomes for students, encouraging them to remain in college and complete their higher level education.

In December 2020, Foróige received a Covid-19 one-time grant from the HSE. This funding enabled Foróige to employ a staff member to expand the college mentoring programme to three additional colleges in 2021; IT Sligo, Letterkenny IT and NUI Galway. Our target in 2021 is to support sixty first year students across four colleges.

With funding, Foróige can employ staff, to expand the college mentoring programme to additional higher level institutions. The budget for each Foróige staff member is €75,000 and each staff member can support a cluster of colleges to establish the programme each year.

The main responsibilities of Foróige college staff is to connect with interested colleges; secure agreement with the colleges to implement the programme; train and support college coordinators (college employees) to facilitate the programme in accordance with Foróige's college mentoring manual.

## Summary of Cost

	<b>Year 1: 2022</b>	<b>Year 2: 2023</b>	<b>Year 3: 2024</b>
<b>*Foróige Staff</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Colleges Supported</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>College Staff Trained</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Students Supported</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>Cost per Student</b>	<b>€2,916</b>	<b>€1,458</b>	<b>€972</b>
<b>Overall Cost</b>	<b>€350,000</b>	<b>€350,000</b>	<b>€350,000</b>

**\* Foróige staff budget attached. 1 Foróige staff member servicing each of the South Cluster, the Midlands East and North Dublin Cluster and the West North/West Cluster and 2 Foróige staff servicing the Dublin Cluster.**

## Conclusion

Foróige's College Mentoring programme is operated through the development of partnerships between higher level institutions and Foróige. The aim of the programme is to increase access for vulnerable, disadvantaged students to higher education. This model of mentoring is low cost, easily scalable and sustainable. It is a model that can be funded, in a structured way, through the National Access Plan 2022-2026.

## References

- O'Sullivan, K., Mulligan, R., Kuster, M., Smith, R., and Hannon, C. (2017). A college focused mentoring programme for students in socio-economically disadvantaged schools: the impact of mentoring relationship and frequency on college-going confidence, application efficacy and aspirations. *Widening Particip. lifelong Learn.* 19, 113–141. doi:10.5456/WPLL.19.2.113
- Raposa, E. B., Hagler, M., Liu, D., and Rhodes, J. E. (2021). Predictors of close faculty-student relationships and mentorship in higher education: findings from the Gallup-Purdue Index. *Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci.* 1483, 36–49. doi:10.1111/nyas.14342.