



CEDAR

Centre for Educational Development
Appraisal and Research

**The NAGTY Goal Programme;
a case study of some initial participants.**

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1. Executive Summary.

1.1. The NAGTY Goal programme.

The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) launched the Goal programme in January 2006. Goal is a four year pilot programme, running from 2006-2009. It is a scholarship programme designed to support gifted and talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds and groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. In addition to targeting students from under-represented ethnic minority groups, low income families, and families with no history of university attendance, students living in isolated, rural, areas will also be targeted. The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick was contracted to evaluate the initial stages of the Goal programme, by examining the experiences of seven Goal students in 2006. These students represented all of the Goal members from the 2006 cohort who attended the NAGTY Summer Schools 2006.

1.2. Headline Conclusions.

- The Goal students were able to benefit from the financial provisions of the programme.
- Only three of the four main constituent elements of the Goal programme had been fully put in place by November 2006.
- A heightened emphasis needs to be placed on the comprehensive delivery of all elements of the Goal programme if the existing cohort of students is to gain the full benefits of membership.

1.3 Main Findings.

- The financial benefits of the scheme were effective in increasing Goal student participation in NAGTY events.
- All the students reported that their parents and schools were pleased with their membership of Goal.
- All the students were unclear about numerous aspects of the Goal programme. For example, they were unable to say why they had been chosen to take part in Goal, and they were unsure about the extent of the Goal programme or their entitlements as members of Goal.
- The Goal launch day did not entirely satisfy the expectations of the students.

- Communication between NAGTY and the students was not as clear nor as regular as the students wanted.
- Apart from access to the NAGTY Summer School programme, none of the other promised components of the Goal programme were fully in place.
- All of the Goal students, with one exception, were concerned that the mentoring scheme had not been implemented.
- There was a limited take-up of NAGTY opportunities, both online and short course opportunities, beyond the summer school programme.
- The careers and leadership programme had not been implemented.

1.3. Recommendations.

- Goal students should be informed directly about why they have been chosen for Goal, and the exact nature of the Goal programme.
- Frequency of contact between Goal and individual students should be specified and continuously maintained throughout a student's membership of Goal.
- The mentoring scheme should be put into operation as soon as it is practically possible.
- Mentors should be recruited with regard to the criterion that the mentors themselves be fairly described as gifted and talented.
- Mentors should be responsible for fully acquainting the Goal students with all the opportunities, both online and short course, as well as summer schools, open to the Goal students.
- Some consideration should be given to facilitating one or two face to face meetings between mentors and their students.
- Launch days should include a full explanation of all aspects of the Goal programme, and students should be offered a tour of the university site.

2. The Goal Programme.

The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) launched the Goal programme in January 2006. Goal is a four year pilot programme, running from 2006-2009, involving 200 selected students in the initial, 2006 cohort, followed by 250 students in 2007, and additional cohorts in subsequent years. The students will be initially selected from seven Local Authorities – Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham, Cumbria, Peterborough, Sheffield, and the London borough of Islington – later rising to 14 LAs in 2007. Goal is a scholarship programme designed to support gifted and talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds and groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. In addition to targeting students from under-represented ethnic minority groups, low income families, and families with no history of university attendance, students living in isolated, rural, areas will also be targeted. NAGTY described the programme as:

‘A high-touch model of intervention involving a range of extended learning opportunities for selected students over a four year period. Designed to reverse the effects of social disadvantage and to support the successful progression of this vulnerable group to university, the programme seeks to engage students with existing and specially tailored NAGTY provision. The programme is funded outside of core government funding by commercial and charitable donations’.

(NAGTY, *Information for Teachers*, 2006)

Specifically, the Goal programme promised to deliver, on an annual basis, to each student participant, the following elements, free of charge to participants:

- 16 days of residential or day courses
- 1 distance learning course (subject specific)
- a careers and leadership programme
- personal support and mentoring

In NAGTY's letter to new Goal students, additional detail was provided about the benefits of a Goal scholarship:

'During the Goal programme we will put you in touch with a mentor who is there to give guidance and support your progress.

You are able to use your Goal scholarship to apply to all the activities offered through the Student Academy, even if they normally carry a charge. Don't miss out on any of the exciting opportunities open to you, including, summer schools, outreach events and online learning. Events take place all round the country and some will be local to you.

You may also like to join our online discussion forums, where you will have the opportunity to discuss and debate a range of topics in an informal environment.'

The stress, therefore, was on personal mentoring, and enhanced access to NAGTY activities through providing financial assistance and encouraging increased student participation.

3. The Case Study students and the evaluation.

The initial case study evaluation of the Goal programme was carried out during October and November 2006. It focused on the seven Goal students who attended a NAGTY residential Summer School in the summer of 2006. These seven students were the only Goal students, of the 200 strong 2006 Goal cohort, who attended a NAGTY Summer School that year. Of the seven case study students, five were boys and two were girls, two of the students (both boys) were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Three of the students came from Peterborough, two (both girls) from Cumbria, and one each from Coventry and Birmingham. Only five of the seven students were available to the CEDAR researcher, with two of the boys (one from Birmingham and one from Peterborough) being unable to be involved in the evaluation. Unfortunately, one of these boys was the only Goal student to have left his residential summer school prior to its end date. The remaining five students, two girls and three boys, were all interviewed, at their schools, by the CEDAR fieldworker (Stephen Cullen). Each interview was recorded, and followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix 1). The interview schedule dealt with five areas:

- The student and NAGTY membership
- Joining Goal
- The student's experience of Goal
- The student's experience of the NAGTY Summer School 2006.
- Overall points.

Each interview, typically, lasted for 30 minutes. The recordings were fully transcribed, and thematically analysed.

The evaluation, therefore, presents a picture of the Goal programme, up to October/November 2006, from the point of view of the 2006 Goal cohort's most active students, as they were the only Goal students who had attended the two, and in one case, three, week residential summer schools.

4. The Findings.

The findings of the evaluation are split into a series of sub-sections, exploring the Goal students' membership of Goal; their understanding of the Goal programme; their parents' and schools' attitudes to their membership of Goal; their experience of the Goal-funded NAGTY Summer School; their perceptions of the benefits of being part of Goal; problems with the Goal programme; and the students' hopes for their future in Goal.

4.1. Joining Goal.

All of the case study interviewees gave very similar accounts of how they came to join the Goal programme. Typically, the students explained that they had been told by their school gifted and talented co-ordinator that they were now members of Goal, and/or had received a letter from NAGTY welcoming them to the Goal programme, and congratulating them on obtaining a Goal scholarship. All of the students appeared to have had only the vaguest of ideas about what the Goal programme was, and none could explain why they had been chosen. Accounts that were representative of the experience of the whole group were, for example, those given by G1 and G3, both highlighting the role of school gifted and talented co-ordinators in the process, and the lack of understanding on the part of the students, arising, it appeared, from a lack of information:

Student G1:

Interviewer: 'How did you hear about the Goal programme?'

G1: 'Miss X again. [the gifted and talented co-ordinator] She said because you're already part of NAGTY do you want to join this thing where it'll give you extra free things. And I said, "go on then".'

Student G3:

Interviewer: 'How did you find out about Goal then?'

G3: 'Well, Mr X [the gifted and talented co-ordinator] again came to me and told me about it. He said that ... well, this school, its people don't have a very good background. I haven't said it properly, but that kind of thing. And so he said they thought [school's name] would be all right, but Mr X said he had pushed it, and then he had picked people to join Goal, and I was picked [...]'

In both accounts, as with those of the remaining interviewees, gifted and talented co-ordinators had a key role in recruiting the students to Goal. Interestingly, in G3's account, there is some suggestion that the gifted and talented co-ordinator had to argue the case for the involvement of his school's NAGTY student members in Goal. None of the students could give a clear account of why they had been chosen by their gifted and talented co-ordinators. As student G6 said, in reply to the question, 'did she [the gifted and talented co-ordinator] say why you had been chosen?', 'I don't think so. She might have told my parents, but I don't think I was told'.

It is clear, then, that these Goal students had little, if any, idea as to why they were chosen to be part of the Goal programme, and that the gifted and talented co-ordinators were the key figures in the selection of these students for the programme.

4.2 Launch Day and the students' understanding of the Goal programme.

All the Goal interviewees attended the Goal launch day, which was held at the University of Warwick. The parents of the students were also invited, and the parents of four of the five students who were invited did attend. None of the students felt that they had any real idea as to what the Goal programme entailed prior to attending the launch day. Further, their understanding of Goal seemed to be only marginally

improved by attendance at the launch day. Although they were all able to give a reasonable account of the events that occurred, they all had difficulties explaining what they had learned about the Goal programme on the day. Nonetheless, even a limited amount of understanding gained at the launch day was important. Student G1 claimed that she had no knowledge at all about what Goal entailed prior to the launch day:

Interviewer: 'When did you hear about it [Goal]?'

G1: 'It was last year because I went to the launch thing of it. [...] That was the first time I heard anything about it.'

[...]

Interviewer: 'So you didn't know anything about it before you went to Warwick?'

G1: 'No'.

The student had simply been reacting to the instructions to go to the launch day that she had received from her school's gifted and talented co-ordinator. This was also the case for the other students, with G6, for example, commenting, 'I joined it [Goal] because Mrs X [the gifted and talented co-ordinator] said that there was a Goal thing, and she was enlisting me in it'.

Descriptions of the Goal day were uniformly vague, but the students were able to explain that they had been involved in some activities while their parents were shown around the University of Warwick campus:

G4: 'It was a Saturday, me and a couple of my mates got taken of to Warwick and had a day about it [Goal], but the only problem is we got split from our parents, and the parents got a tour around Warwick and Goal explained [to them], we had to sit in an over-sized lecture theatre with some idiot who thought ice-breaker games were fun! So that wasn't one of the best days, but there could have been far worse things that could've happened.'

G3: 'Our parents were taken around the campus. We were in one of the lecture theatres and there was some company came in about positive thinking'.

G2: 'We learnt a bit about the Goal programme and then parents and my sister and people like that went off to have a tour of the university, which I was really looking forward to, and we got to sit in this theatre thing listening to some man at the front saying how we'd got to do power breathing and all this about motivation, and I got quite confused, because if we're in the top 5% we must be relatively motivated anyway'.

There is a sense here that the students felt that they were not really being given enough information, that their parents had 'Goal explained', but they did not. This came on top of a situation where school gifted and talented co-ordinators knew what was happening, but the children did not. This sense of a lack of communication with the children, and a lack of information, was reinforced by the students' inability to give a detailed explanation of the Goal programme, even following their attendance at the launch day. Student G1 noted:

'They didn't tell us that much [at the launch day], because it was mainly just us sat in a big room and him doing some exercise things with us. He didn't really explain much about what it was or what we were going to get out of it or things'.

Interviewer: 'So when you came back home and your mum and dad said, "What was it all about then?" You said...'

G1: "'I'm not sure", yeah, but since then people have come to school to do research about what they thought about Goal, and then we found out more about what it actually was'.

The student was unable to say exactly who the 'people' were, but it is likely that they were researchers from NAGTY, gathering baseline data.

Despite the vagueness of their understanding of the Goal programme as it was explained at the launch day, three of the students were able to say that they understood, on the day, that membership of Goal brought with it financial benefits. One student, G2, was immediately able to apply for a Summer School place on that basis:

'We [the student and her parents] talked to a man called X [...] and he explained it to us, and before we went we looked at the website and we found this business and economics summer school course, so we thought, well, if

this Goal thing means that we go on that free, we'll print out the stuff and take it with us and see what it says, and so it was very near the closing date for applications, so when we took it down with us and we got the application form while we there, we filled it in there and then and gave it to X for the Goal, and so I'd got the Goal membership before I went on the Summer School'.

The overall impression of the launch day, given by the students, was one of vagueness. There was a sense that they were at the launch day because they had been directed there by their schools' gifted and talented co-ordinators. There was also a sense that the Goal programme was, perhaps, explained more to their parents than to the students.

4.3 Being informed about Goal.

Subsequent to their attendance at the Goal launch day, the students acquired more knowledge about the content and opportunities of the Goal programme. The most clearly understood aspect of Goal related to the financial benefits arising from memberships, benefits that enabled the students to attend a NAGTY Summer School in the summer of 2006. In addition, the students were aware, to varying degrees, that various e-based opportunities were open to them. However, only one of the students fully understood that a Goal mentor was supposed to be provided to Goal student members.

All the students were aware that there were various e-options open to them, but only two had taken advantage of these options. One student, G1, said that after meeting 'someone from NAGTY' at her school, she understood that:

'there was something about [...] stuff you could do on the internet, but I haven't actually done any of it, but that seemed like a good idea, because you didn't actually have to go and do it with any other people, if you just wanted to sit and do it by yourself, you could'.

Student G3 indicated that he knew about NAGTY student forums, but not because he had learned of them through the Goal programme or Goal information:

Interviewer: 'Have there been any internet-based things that NAGTY has offered you through Goal?'

G3: 'Except for the forums, the student forums they've got. But that wasn't publicised much. The only reason I've been through that is through summer school really to get in contact with people I've met. I don't really want to go on it to be honest. I haven't been on the website that much either, just since I found out about all these events I never knew about, I've been looking on the web. My dad's been on it a couple of times and he doesn't think it is well organised. He thinks things are quite hard to find'.

Only one of the other students said that she had used the e-resources. Again, this was as a result of attending the summer school, and, perhaps importantly, as a result of personal contact with a NAGTY person involved with Goal:

G2: 'I have actually just joined an on-line learning course because this came through the summer school. I met a lady called X, and she rang me to see how the summer school had gone and she asked me had I done anything else like the on-line learning courses, and I said, "no", because I'm not a technology-based person, and I get quite confused sometimes. I didn't understand how you could have seminars on-line, whether I'd have to go on-line every night at 4 o'clock to do my course for an hour or something like that, because I wouldn't have been able to do it with homework and after-school things and all sorts of things, I wouldn't have been able to do that, so I never ventured into that area'.

This student was reassured by the NAGTY contact that this was not how the course worked, and had taken up a creative writing option. She was, however, the only one of the students to have taken advantage of such an e-course. It appeared that the personal intervention and advice from the NAGTY contact had been decisive in this case.

In addition to the provision of 16 days of fees-free residential or day courses, and a distance learning course, the Goal scheme includes a 'careers and leadership programme', and 'personal support and mentoring'. Only one of the students mentioned the careers programme, and only two of the students had anything but the vaguest idea about the mentoring scheme. This was, perhaps, unsurprising as their vague grasp of the detail of the Goal programme, coupled with the fact that, at the time of interview, neither the mentoring, nor the careers and leadership programme were in place. A typical exchange came with student G2:

Interviewer: 'Apart from the financial side of it, was there anything else that attracted you to Goal?'

G2: 'I don't really know'.

Interviewer: 'Did they offer you anything else apart from free cash? What else was in the Goal package?'

G2: Two free online courses. I think there was something about a mentor'.

Interviewer: 'Right, ok. What was the mentor bit then?'

G2: 'I'm not quite sure. I think it's meant to be Mrs X [the school gifted and talented co-ordinator], but I don't know'.

Two of the students did know about the promised mentoring scheme, one of whom was expecting to hear about it soon (an expectation based on no evidence), and the other was concerned that it would be too late for him by the time he was given a Goal mentor.

Interviewer: 'What did they tell you about it [the mentoring system]?'

G6: 'There was a mentoring system for several, for subjects, and we'd be paired up with people that know about it, and it's also to do with careers and what subjects we should take, and what 'A' levels and GCSEs and whatnots we should take. For what we're looking to want to be doing in life later. [...] I'm expecting that [assignment of a mentor] to be happening fairly shortly'.

One of the students, G3, particularly mentioned the mentoring scheme as one of the key reasons why he had wanted to be in Goal:

Interviewer: 'What do you think the advantages are going to be about being in Goal?'

G3: Well, for the personal mentoring scheme, but no one's said anything about that yet, because you have a personal mentor or something, but....'

Interviewer: 'And that's what you particularly wanted?'

G3: 'Yes [...] because, like, I'm not sure, but I'd like to find out more about career paths and that kind of thing, that are not just normal, like your normal mathematician or something. Something like forensic scientist or something along those lines, and like what things could help me get to where and that kind of thing'.

This student, a Year 10 pupil, was concerned that he would have to wait too long for a mentor, as he wanted advice on the match between different careers and school-level qualifications.

Overall, the students showed a patchy grasp of the opportunities available to them under the Goal programme. It was significant that the only student who said that she was taking part in an online course was doing so because of a personal intervention on the behalf of a NAGTY staff member. That sort of personal contact was, effectively, a model of mentoring activity, but the mentoring scheme, which only two of the students had a clear idea of, was not in place.

4.4. Parental and school reactions to student Goal membership.

The students took it for granted that their schools were pleased that they had been selected for the Goal programme, because, as student G2 commented, 'it makes them look good, doesn't it?' All the students said that their parents were pleased, and in one case 'quite surprised', that they had joined Goal. The students described situations that appeared to indicate interested, proactive parents, who were concerned about their children's education, and educational future. Examples of this included:

G1: 'They were proud of me more than anything'.

Interviewer: 'Did they think it was a good idea?'

G1: 'Yes, they thought it was going to stretch me and give me a bit more'.

G4: 'My parents tend to be...I'll have a look on the site, if I find anything I'll let them know, and then we work out if it's feasible [...]'.
[...]

G2: 'They were really proud of me'.

G6: [on taking a NAGTY day course]: 'My parents found it [on the NAGTY website] and saw Mrs X [the gifted and talented co-ordinator], and Mrs X said, yes, she'd recommend me for it'.

There was also evidence that a student's success in NAGTY and Goal was having an impact, through parental encouragement, among at least one student's siblings:

G3: 'Dad said that if you do get good results doors will open for me, so he's proved right'.

Interviewer: 'So was he quite chuffed then?'

G3: 'Yes. He was quite happy about it'.

Interviewer: 'Have you got any brothers and sisters?'

G3: 'I've got a younger sister'.

Interviewer: 'Is she bright as well?'

G3: 'Well, so far, yes. They [his parents] always try and spur her on to be like me'.

4.5. The students' experiences of Goal

Apart from the single student taking an e-based course, the students' other experiences of Goal have related to participation in existing NAGTY schemes, enabled, for the Goal students, by the remission of fees. As a result, all of these students attended a NAGTY summer school during summer 2006 (the only Goal students of the 200 in the cohort to do so), and one of the students has taken part in a number of day schools.

All the students described their experience of the NAGTY summer schools in very positive terms. In common with the overwhelming majority of all NAGTY summer school attendees, the Goal students enjoyed the academic, social, and friendship aspects of summer school attendance. Of the seven Goal students who attended a summer school in 2006, one did not complete the summer school course and returned home early. This was an unusual occurrence, both for NAGTY students in general, and for the Goal students, but, unfortunately, this particular Goal student was unavailable for the evaluation. As a result, it was not possible to explore the non-completion of the summer school.

Representative comments from the Goal students about their summer school experiences included:

Interviewer: 'When you said that you really, really enjoyed it [summer school], was that the academic side or the social side?'

G1: 'Both were really good, because my academic friends and my social friends are completely different, so I had a lot of friends and it was just being with people that you didn't have to dumb yourself down for. It was just great, and I really want to go again if I can'.

Interviewer: 'So, overall, did you think that the summer school was a worthwhile experience?'

G3: 'Yes, because it's changed my outlook on my work as well in all subjects, not just maths. In English, I've had to recently write a horror story, and my dad said, "you style of writing is a lot better than before". So it can only be that that [summer school] has changed something'.

G2: [On the summer school lead academic]: 'He definitely seemed to talk to you, whereas some teachers [at school] sort of almost recite a lesson by heart at the back wall or something. He listened to our questions, and there was an element of competitiveness in there as well, competing against other teams [groups]'.

G6: 'Because it was all NAGTY students we were able to get into a lot more depth and we worked faster. We didn't have to take our time and wait for students, because there wasn't any disruption at all [...] so it was a good environment'.

These very positive responses to summer school experiences indicate that the provision of summer school scholarships to these Goal students enabled a group of children who had not, hitherto, felt able to attend summer school (because of financial considerations) to do so. The summer schools themselves were a pre-existing programme, standing outside the Goal programme, but Goal funding enabled this group of children to benefit from the summer schools.

4.6. Benefits of Goal membership.

From the students' point of view, the over-riding benefit, so far, of their membership of Goal have been the financial benefits of the programme. All of the students indicated that without the fees being paid for their summer school attendance they would not have been able to participate in that scheme. Similarly, the student who had taken part in a number of day events had been enabled to do so because of the financial benefits accruing to Goal membership. There was, therefore, an increase in participation levels among these students in NAGTY events that can be traced directly to Goal membership. All the students mentioned the financial benefits of being in Goal:

Interviewer: 'What from your point of view, do you think is the major benefit from being in Goal?'

G4: 'Probably the freebie events, because the CSI thing that I went to do in April, I went to the first one NAGTY had started then, and if the school and the Goal scholarship hadn't funded it, it would have cost, I think it was £264.50, which I couldn't have done'.

G1: 'It's [Goal] got opportunities and things that I wouldn't have been able to do normally, and it just gives me a chance to do different things'.

Interviewer: 'What sort of opportunities?'

G1: 'Like the outreach events, the summer schools, which I could have already done with NAGTY, but because they were really expensive it makes it a bit easier to do them with Goal'.

Interviewer: 'What other things did you think was good about [Goal]?'

G2: 'Well, it gives you 16 days free residential so that sort of puts the cost down a lot, because I've got to get transport there and back , the Summer School was something like £600'.

There was a slight increase in the Goal students' interest in other NAGTY events and opportunities that seemed to have been awakened by Goal membership. For example, student G2 took part in the creative writing online course as result of being approached personally by a member of NAGTY's staff at Warwick. Similarly, student G6, who had always taken an interest in courses offered by NAGTY, realised that he would be able to take part in more activities because of the financial benefits of Goal, and was, therefore, looking for more courses that he might be interested in. Student G4, who had attended short NAGTY courses prior to joining Goal had attended more - including 'a free maths thing, a puzzly thing' - because of the financial benefits of Goal.

4.7. Problems with Goal.

At the time of writing the Goal programme had been in existence for 11 months. For the Goal students who were able to attend a NAGTY summer school, that experience had been the dominant one of Goal membership. Nonetheless, the Goal students had a number of problems with the Goal programme:

- They only had a partial understanding of the aims, purposes and opportunities of Goal.
- There was a lack of good, consistent, clear communication between NAGTY and the students.
- No careers and leadership programme was in place.
- No mentoring and personal support programme was in place.
- Goal relied on other, non-Goal, NAGTY provision. No provision that was specific to Goal had been put in place.

The students' understanding of Goal was, on almost all levels, characterised by vagueness, and uncertainty, although they were still keen to participate in events and schemes that might be of interest to them. Typically, students were unable to give precise explanations of why they had been recruited to Goal, what the full benefits of being part of the programme were, or what they might expect in the future.

G4: '[I] got a letter through saying that I'd been accepted as part of the Goal scholarship, which was weird because I hadn't actually filled out any forms [...]'

G1 [on the launch day]: 'They didn't tell us that much [...] he didn't really explain much about what it [Goal] was or what we were going to get out of it or things'.

Interviewer: 'So, apart from the financial side of it, was there anything else that attracted you to Goal?'

G2: 'I don't really know'.

The one area that all students were clear upon was that their were financial benefits associated with Goal membership, and that the financial provisions had enabled them to attend summer school in 2006.

The key explanation for the lack of understanding about the Goal programme exhibited by the Goal students was the lack of good communications between NAGTY and the students. The primary avenue for information typically came from the

students' gifted and talented co-ordinators at school. These students were fortunate in that their schools all appeared to have reasonably effective gifted and talented co-ordinators. Parents, too, appeared to be involved in assisting the students to find and understand information on the NAGTY website, especially following letters announcing the students acceptance into the Goal programme. Nonetheless, the students still appeared to be in need of clearer, and more continuous, directly supplied information specifically aimed at the students themselves.

There was no careers and leadership programme in place, and only one of the students seemed aware that this was part of the Goal programme. Their understanding of the mentoring and personal support programme was weak, but all of the students, with one exception, were keen to access such support. There was some degree of uncertainty about what mentoring would involve, whether it would be just limited to e-contact, what type of people would take on the role of mentor, and whether or not the students would be able to have some face to face meetings with their mentors. As one student, G2, put it, when talking about possible mentoring models:

'I don't know [what to expect]. I can't really say. I don't know whether you'd feel more intimidated to talk to them [a business mentor]. Obviously, if they're in London you would never talk to them face to face, it would have to be by e-mails or something like that...'

The main success of the Goal programme, thus far, has been the provision of funding to enable a small number of Goal students to attend a NAGTY summer school. This was, for five of the seven students, a very positive experience, with, for example, G2 commenting, 'I would never have gone to that summer school without Goal, and I've really got a lot out of it'. However, the NAGTY summer schools were not integral to the Goal programme, but existed outside the programme and were not created by it.

4.8. The students' hopes for the Goal programme.

With one exception, all the students indicated that they would like to be assigned a mentor. This was the only salient point that the students' made when talking about the future of Goal. Two of the students gave clear statements about what sort of things they would like to be able to approach a mentor about, and what type of

person they would like as a mentor. Student G1, who was studying for 13 GCSEs, commented:

'Mentoring would be nice, just because at the moment the amount of work that I've got and things, just somebody to be able to talk to in my life, "well, what shall I do about this?", and things, and advice for your future. That would be probably the only [additional] thing I'd really want - a mentor'.

This seems to be a good encapsulation of the possible role of the mentor as seen by these Goal students - a source of advice about both current and future options and concerns. Such a model of mentoring would contrast with mentoring based on non-directive support, something that was not raised by any of the students. Another of the students, G6, made a very clear statement about the type of mentor that he would like to be in touch with:

'I'd like someone that was also gifted and talented personally, just because it gives them more knowledge of exactly what, and someone that has got the same kind of interests, or does the same kind of things that I do, just because it's easier to ask them, because if they're older then they'll be able to say what the problems are, and what to do and what subjects they recommend'.

In addition, three of the students expressed a hope that they would be able to attend another NAGTY summer school.

5. Conclusions and recommendations.

This evaluation report focused on five of seven Goal students. The basis for their inclusion in the evaluation was that the seven students were the only Goal students from the 2006 Goal cohort who attended a NAGTY Summer School in 2006. Two of the students were unavailable for interview, including the only student who had not, unusually for all NAGTY Summer School students, completed summer school. Although the case study sample of five was, therefore, small, it nonetheless represented, to some degree, a random sample of the 2006 Goal cohort. The conclusions therefore present a picture of the Goal programme in its first year of operation.

5.1. Conclusions.

5.1.1. Positive aspects of the implementation of Goal:

There were some notable positive aspects of the Goal programme for these students:

- The financial benefits of the scheme were effective in increasing Goal student participation in NAGTY events. All the students said that without Goal financial assistance they would not have been able to attend NAGTY Summer School.
- Two of the students had attended other NAGTY events as a result of Goal financing. Others said that they had taken a greater interest in further participation.
- All the students said that they had benefited, in academic, social, and personal terms, from NAGTY Summer School attendance.
- All the students said that their parents and schools were pleased with their membership of Goal.
- At least two of the students had benefited from direct, personal contact between themselves and NAGTY staff. In one case, personal contact by a NAGTY staff member had enabled a student to take advantage of the summer school programme, in the second case, telephone contact by a NAGTY staff member had alerted a student to an online NAGTY course that the student had subsequently enrolled in.
- All the students were looking forward to further involvement in Goal.

5.1.2. Negative aspects of the implementation of Goal.

There were a number of negative aspects to the operation of Goal:

- All the students were unclear about numerous aspects of the Goal programme. They were unable to say why they had been chosen to take part in Goal, and they were unsure about the extent of the Goal programme or their entitlements as members of Goal.
- The Goal launch day did not, according to the students, fully explain the Goal programme. There was also a sense that some of the activities at the launch day might not have been as useful as they might have been.

The students would also have welcomed being able to take part in the tour of Warwick University that was offered to their accompanying adults.

- Communication between NAGTY and the students themselves was not, perhaps, as clear nor as regular as it might have been.
- Apart from access to the NAGTY Summer School programme, none of the other promised components of the Goal programme were effectively, and universally, in place.
- All of the Goal students, with one exception, were concerned that the mentoring scheme had not been implemented. None of the students was entirely clear about the nature of the mentoring scheme, but there was a clear desire for advice and guidance from interested, and informed, mentors.
- There was a limited take-up of NAGTY opportunities, both online and short course opportunities, beyond the summer school programme. There was a clear sense that the students were unaware and/or unclear how, for example, online courses operated.
- The careers and leadership programme had not been implemented. Only one of the students was aware that it was part of the Goal programme.

In the light of these findings, the following recommendations can be made. (It is noted, however, that steps have been taken by NAGTY, since the fieldwork for this report was undertaken, to improve the delivery of Goal. These steps are outlined in Appendix 2).

5.2. Recommendations:

- Goal students should be informed directly about why they have been chosen for Goal, and the exact nature of the Goal programme. This information should be communicated directly, and in full, to the students, in addition to their schools' gifted and talented co-ordinators, and the students' parents.
- Students should be informed about the proposed pattern of contact. Contact, either by letter or e-mail, between NAGTY Goal and individual students should be regularly maintained throughout the students' membership of Goal. This would strengthen a sense of belonging to the Goal scheme, and increase participation in NAGTY activities by the Goal students.

- The mentoring scheme should be put into operation as soon as it is practically possible.
- Mentors should be recruited with regard to the criteria that the mentors themselves be fairly described as gifted and talented. Given the profile of the Goal students – being in the top 5% of school age pupils, and, at the same, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, or from minority groups traditionally under-represented at university – it is important that they are supported to aspire to the best universities. In consequence, mentors drawn from those universities (for example, from the Russell Group) may well be a good mentoring option for Goal students.
- Mentors should be responsible for fully acquainting the Goal students with all the opportunities, both online and short course, as well as summer schools, open to the Goal students. For example, the mentors should be fully acquainted with the students' personal interests, and be able, as a result, to guide them towards courses that they might find to be of specific interest to them.
- Some consideration should be given to facilitating one or two face to face meetings between mentors and their students, as the evidence suggested that the students would like to build up a personal relationship beyond that possible by e-contact.
- Launch days should include a full explanation of all aspects of the Goal programme, and students should be offered a tour of the university site.

The Goal programme has the potential to greatly improve the educational chances of the target groups. To do this effectively, the programme should aim to fulfil its declared intent of being a 'a high-touch model of intervention'.

Appendix 1. The interview questionnaire.

NAGTY Goal! Evaluation 2006.

Student interview schedule.

Explain the evaluation, by CEDAR for NAGTY.

Explain confidential nature of interview.

Ask permission to record interview.

1. NAGTY:

- 1a) Can you tell me how you found out about NAGTY, and how, and when you came to join NAGTY's Student Academy?
- 1b) What did your parents think of you joining NAGTY?
- 1c) What did your school think of you joining NAGTY?
- 1d) What sort of things have you done through NAGTY?

2. Joining Goal!:

- 2a) When and how did you hear about Goal?
- 2b) How did you join the Goal programme?
- 2c) Why did Goal interest you?
- 2d) What benefits did you think that you could receive from being part of Goal?
- 2e) Did you think that there might be any disadvantages to being part of Goal?
- 2f) What did your parents think of you joining Goal?
- 2g) What did your school think of you joining Goal?
- 2h) What were your expectations in terms of the Goal programme?

3. The experience of Goal?

- 3a) What information have you had from NAGTY about Goal since you joined?
- 3b) Have you been on any courses (internet/residential/day) through Goal? If so, which ones?
- 3c) What sort of personal support or mentoring has NAGTY provided through Goal?
- 3d) Has NAGTY helped you draw up an individual education plan of any sort? If yes, what is the plan like?
- 3e) What do you think of the Goal programme so far?

4. The NAGTY Summer School 2006

4a) Which summer school did you attend, and what strand did you take?

4b) Can you tell me about the summer school in both academic and social terms? How did you find the work? What were the other people like? Did you enjoy the experience? What were the negative aspects of the Summer School, if any?

4c) Do you think that the summer school was, overall, a good experience? Would you like to go on another summer school?

Overall

5a) Before we finish are there any other points that you would like to make about Goal?

Thank you for helping with this project.

Appendix 2. Developments in the Goal programme.

An outline provided by NAGTY, 10 November 2006.

- The introduction of an improved communications plan that includes parents, teachers and students. This will alert participants to opportunities available to them and outline how they can be accessed. Teachers in schools are being encouraged to meet with students on a regular basis to highlight opportunities available to them and to assist in monitoring their progress.
- Longer term work is being carried out to establish guidance for schools on supporting Goal students.
- Improved communications with Local Authorities to try and utilise their local knowledge and resources more.
- Introduction of residential events organised exclusively for Goal students in December 2006 (Goal Extra events). These are to help prompt participation and to act as a spring-board for future participation. The events include stimulating academic sessions, social interaction and professionally delivered workshops on goal-setting and motivation.
- Mentoring pilots are being established for some Goal students and there is ongoing work to try and establish a cohesive national strategy. This will help provide a local support for students and support a communications plan. The objectives of the mentoring support, the key areas of impact including confidence, motivation, self-esteem, attainment and awareness of educational opportunity.
- Travel to events has been identified as a key barrier for students. We are issuing students with an annual travel allowance. This will be managed by the school and they are accountable for the expenditure. We acknowledge that the barriers associated with the travel are not just financial and that putting money into schools will help provide staff with an incentive to organise and support transport for a small cohort.
- Arranging additional events for Goal students late in the Spring term, mobilising partners to work with this cohort.
- Work is being carried out to establish an online community for Goal students where they can interact and access information easily.

