



Centre for Educational Development,  
Appraisal and Research

**Evaluation of the  
The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition,  
2007.**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### ***Introduction***

The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition was a ten week business competition targeted at NAGTY Goal students working in teams of two to four pupils from schools across England. The competition was run jointly by NAGTY and The Brightside Trust, an educational charity with a focus on widening participation, and experience of providing online e-mentoring for school students.

The Big Deal was evaluated by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), the University of Warwick. The evaluation undertaken by CEDAR involved document analysis; questionnaires completed by participating students at the beginning and end of the competition, and analysed using the SPSS statistical software; face to face interviews with staff of the Brightside Trust, participating students, responsible Big Deal team teachers; telephone interviews with the Big Deal course consultant, and Big Deal mentors; along with online access to the Big Deal blogs.

### ***Key strengths.***

The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition was efficiently managed by both NAGTY and The Brightside Trust.

- Students were provided with high quality resources to enable them to participate effectively in the Big Deal.
- Teachers and mentors were able to access clear information about their supporting roles .
- The e-mentoring structure provided an effective system for students and mentors to communicate regularly.
- The majority of students engaged in the Big Deal met the criteria, in terms of their backgrounds, set out by NAGTY and The Brightside Trust.
- The majority of students experienced an autonomous educational project.

### ***Areas for development.***

A number of issues arose in relation to The Big Deal programme 2007 which may need to be addressed for future presentations of the competition:

- Although the majority of students appear to have been drawn from those groups identified as being at risk of under-achievement, the fact that some schools did not focus on these groups led to some anomalies.
- Some students and mentors believed that there were some minor problems with the operation of the Big Deal Blogsite.
- Some teachers and mentors did not appear to fully grasp the student-led nature of the competition, and sought to lead teams, rather than providing facilitation and support alone.

### ***Conclusions.***

The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition, 2007, was a successful programme that engaged 35 teams from 23 schools in 10 Local Authorities. At the outset, 120 Year 9-10 students, members of NAGTY and Goal, entered the competition, 79 students, from 22 teams, and 15 schools, made it to the final Competition Day after ten weeks of enterprise project work. The Big Deal was a positive and enjoyable business learning experience for the students involved, and enabled them to take advantage of an effective and high quality e-mentoring scheme facilitated by The Brightside Trust and NAGTY. The Big Deal model is a sustainable model of business education for gifted and talented school students, and the 2007 competition laid strong foundations for future Big Deal competitions.

### ***Recommendations.***

There are a number of recommendations with regard to the future presentations of The Big Deal:

- The choice of students needs to be more clearly regulated by the competition organisers. Schools need to be clearly informed about the target group being students at risk of under-achievement.
- There is scope for the further development of the e-mentoring structures. Post-Competition Day feedback may well be useful to round off the students' learning experience, and for helping schools prepare for future competitions.
- Some teachers and mentors indicated that a clearer and more detailed exposition of their roles needed to be made at the Launch Day.
- The facilitating and advisory role of teachers in this student-led programme needs to be further stressed.

## **1. Background.**

### **1.1 The NAGTY Goal programme.**

In 2006 the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) initiated a four year pilot project – the Goal programme - aimed at NAGTY student members deemed to be in groups at risk of under-achievement. NAGTY's mission statement for the Goal programme stated:

‘NAGTY is committed to helping young people from under-represented groups to see that higher education is attainable. Goal is a scholarship programme from NAGTY, designed to support gifted and talented students from socially disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds who are currently under-represented in higher education’<sup>1</sup>.

The first cohort of Goal students (2006), consisted of 200 selected NAGTY members from seven LAs (Coventry, Birmingham, Cumbria, Peterborough, Sheffield, Leicester, and Islington). The second cohort (2007) consists of approximately 250 NAGTY students from fourteen different LAs. The pilot will continue until 2009, with an additional two cohorts being recruited.

NAGTY's stated aims for the Goal programme were to improve outcomes for the target group in a number of ways:

- by improving the effectiveness of NAGTY's intervention strategies aimed at the students
- by enhancing the personal educational experiences of individual students
- by increasing participation rates in NAGTY activities by the students
- by monitoring the valued added by the Goal programme over the period of students' involvement in Goal

In terms of outcomes for individual students, the key objectives of Goal are to increase student:

- confidence
- motivation
- self-esteem

- attainment
- awareness of, and attitudes to Higher Education

To fulfil these objectives, and improve outcomes for the target group, the Goal programme offers each student:

- Access to day and residential courses
- Access to a distance learning course
- Access to a careers and leadership programme
- personal support and mentoring

All these opportunities are offered to Goal students free of charge, and combine access to existing NAGTY programmes, such as the residential summer schools, with new provision linked to Goal. The Big Deal is the primary example of targeted provision for Goal students. NAGTY financial partners for the Goal programme are The Goldman Sachs Foundation, the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Settlement, and the Caterpillar Foundation.

In addition to providing funding to enable Goal students to attend NAGTY events, courses, and residential schools – including, in 2007, two Goal-specific short residential schools at the University of Lancaster, and Aston University<sup>2</sup> -, a ten week business competition, ‘The Big Deal’, ran from 2 May – 14 July, 2007

### **1.2 The NAGTY Goal ‘Big Deal’ National Enterprise Competition.**

The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition was a ten week business competition targeted at Goal students working in teams of two to four pupils from schools across England. The competition was run jointly by NAGTY and The Brightside Trust, an educational charity with a focus on widening participation, and experience of providing online e-mentoring for school students. The Brightside Trust describes its central aim as being:

‘To provide individuals with the confidence and skills they need to overcome social disadvantage. Working in partnership with government, corporate and not-for-profit organisations, the Brightside Trust aims to deliver a set of programmes that enable talented but underprivileged young people to aspire to and achieve meaningful careers’<sup>3</sup>

NAGTY and the Brightside Trust constructed an enterprise programme that consisted of the following elements:

- A Launch Day business conference for participating students, their mentors and teachers, held at the University of Warwick, 2 May 2007.
- Business mentors drawn from large corporations: CAT, Ernst Young LLP, Eversheds, Goldman Sachs International, Irwin Mitchell, JP Morgan. KBCFP, and PWC. In addition, some mentors were drawn from business education involving the Warwick Business School, and the Reed Academy of Enterprise.
- A web site – ‘big deal blogs’ – provided and facilitated by The Brightside Trust. This web site provided a range of supporting information and links for the participating students, and was the interface for contact between the mentors and the school students.
- A ten week programme of business activities and tasks to support the students through the competition.
- Three booklets providing support for all participants: ‘The Big Deal: Student Guide’, ‘The Big Deal: School Staff Guide’, ‘The Big Deal: Mentor Guide’.
- A Competition Day – The Big Deal Business Conference – for participating students, their mentors and teachers, held at the Aston Business School, Aston University, 14 July, 2007.
- A competition prize – a trip to New York.

## **2. Aims of the Goal Big Deal competition.**

### **2.1. The focus of the Big Deal competition**

NAGTY's view of the Big Deal was that it was a competition whose aims related directly to the key aims of the Goal Programme, that is the support of disadvantaged school students who are at risk of underachievement. This group was defined by NAGTY as possessing some or all of the following characteristics:

- 'Those suffering socio-economic deprivation as defined by the Acorn criteria (hard pressed and moderate means)
- Those from BEM [Black and Ethnic Minority ]groups that are with a record of underperformance.
- Looked after children and traveller children.
- Children with a mis-match between their cognitive ability and their basic skills.
- Children with multiple exceptionalities, i.e. defined as having a SEN [Special Educational Need].
- Children with low aspirations and/or motivation.
- Children performing below expectations of their peers in similar circumstances'.<sup>4</sup>

To enhance support for disadvantaged students, the Goal programme, and the Big Deal competition, aimed to:

- 'develop a network of support for students to best inform their decision-making at critical points in their educational careers.
- provide a range of targeted interventions through partners (including HEIs [Higher Education Institutions]) to support motivation, confidence, self-esteem and attainment.
- facilitate students' participation in this range of opportunities, in order to maximise the benefits that this involvement brings.
- cultivate philanthropic funding and support to deliver the Goal programme and raise awareness of issues concerning gifted and talented disadvantaged learners, in order to position this work with those outside of education'<sup>5</sup>



The Brightside Trust, NAGTY's partner in the creation and delivery of the Big Deal competition, also had a clear view of the aims of the project. A Brightside Trust interviewee explained that there was a close match between the Goal programme's focus and that of the Trust: 'it seemed that what we wanted and what they [NAGTY Goal] wanted was essentially the same thing'. On a practical level, the Brightside Trust had the experience of e-mentoring (mentoring using an internet based interface) that NAGTY lacked, but wished to extend its experience and capabilities in that area by piloting a business-related e-mentoring system that was built around a task-orientated, discrete course. The same interviewee noted:

'What was particularly interesting for us was this task-orientated e-mentoring, and the set amount of time . In our e-mentoring we have not had that before, it has been a general e-mentoring, you put up prompts on the site, but there's been no tasks, and you can mentor on Bright Journals up to the whole academic year, and there's not such a strict start and end'.

This interviewee also provided an insight into corporate sponsors' aims and perceptions of involvement in the Big Deal. The interviewee explained that the Trust had close contacts with various City corporations, and that, for example, one corporation which helped recruit mentors for the Big Deal focused on the benefits for disadvantaged gifted and talented students, but, also, for the corporation itself:

'They [the corporation] aren't really shy in saying that they are looking for potential employees, and, you know, all this kind of activity, although it is all good stuff, it is also recruitment for them [...] I think they thought they had struck gold when we were coming to them saying, we've got gifted and talented kids that are disadvantaged, there's nowhere else in the country, no-one else has got that cohort of kids, and here it is for you to utilise'.

The role of enlightened self-interest was seen to be an important element in extending business involvement in the scheme.

## **2.2. The students**

NAGTY did not generate specific data concerning the backgrounds of the Big Deal students. However, NAGTY did generate baseline data on the backgrounds of the second Goal cohort, from which 89 per cent of the Big Deal students were drawn<sup>6</sup>.

That data indicated that the Goal student group were all aged 14 or 15, 52.4% were male, and 70.1% were white British<sup>7</sup>. The remainder of the cohort came from a variety of backgrounds (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Ethnic background of second Goal cohort<sup>8</sup>.

| Ethnicity                                      | (f) | Percentage of cohort | National Secondary School Population (%) |
|--|-----|----------------------|--|
| Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi             | 1   | 0.4                  | 1  |
| Asian or Asian British-Indian                  | 5   | 2                    | 2.4                                      |
| Asian or Asian British-Pakistani               | 13  | 5.2                  | 2.5                                      |
| Mixed-White and Asian                          | 6   | 2.4                  | 0.5                                      |
| Other Asian Background                         | 2   | 0.8                  | 0.8                                      |
| Black or Black British-Caribbean/Mixed         | 10  | 4                    | 1.3                                      |
| Black or Black British-African/Mixed           | 10  | 4                    | 0.2                                      |
| Other Black Background                         | 1   | 0.4                  | 0.4                                      |
| Chinese or Other Ethnic Background-<br>Chinese | 4   | 1.6                  | 0.4                                      |
| Other Ethnic Background                        | 4   | 1.6                  | 0.9                                      |
| Other Mixed Background                         | 5   | 2                    | 0.9                                      |
| Other White Background                         | 4   | 1.6                  | 2.3                                      |
| White-British                                  | 177 | 70.8                 | 80.9                                     |
| White-Irish                                    | 1   | 0.4                  | 0.4                                      |
| Not Disclosed/Not recorded                     | 7   | 2.8                  | 5.1                                      |

The Goal baseline data also indicated that 35.4% of the cohort had relatives that had been (or were going) to University. NAGTY believed that 'this fits well with the expectation that the majority of students [members of Goal] would probably come from families from which no close relatives had been to university'<sup>9</sup> Finally, the NAGTY baseline data indicated that, '89.9% of the responding students indicated that their father was in employment and 77.5% indicated that their mother was in employment'. In terms of occupational classifications, the data indicated that, 'Broadly speaking, the mothers of the students in Goal Cohort II have a tendency to be employed in support roles for care professions. The most popular jobs appear to be 'Teacher Assistant' and 'Nurse', though there is plenty of diversity with occupations falling in the lower end classifications.

The occupation of fathers of the students in Cohort II is very varied but there seems to be a considerable amount employed in skilled trade occupations (i.e. plumber, fitter, cook)<sup>10</sup>.

### ***2.3. The competition group***

At the outset of the Big Deal, 23 schools, from 10 Local Authorities, registered 35 teams, involving over 120 Year 9-10 students. By the time of the Big Deal Business Conference Competition Day, 15 schools, and 22 teams, with 79 students were still involved in the competition, and gave their final presentations.

### **3. The Evaluation.**

#### **3.1. Methodology**

The evaluation undertaken by CEDAR was a mixed methods approach involving document analysis; questionnaires completed by participating students at the beginning and end of the competition, and analysed using the SPSS statistical software; face to face interviews with staff of the Brightside Trust, participating students, responsible Big Deal team teachers; telephone interviews with the Big Deal course consultant, and Big Deal mentors; along with online access to the Big Deal blogs.

Thirty nine student questionnaires were completed at the Launch Day – the Big Deal Business Conference – at the start of the programme. 38 student questionnaires were completed at the Big Deal Competition Day. The questionnaires were distributed randomly among students in attendance, and were afterwards analysed using SPSS. The numbers of completed questionnaires represented 32.5% of the students who started the competition, and 48% of the students who completed the competition.

Seven school teams, representing 24 students, were interviewed face to face by the CEDAR fieldworker. The interviews were recorded, and five of them were fully transcribed. Four responsible teachers were interviewed face to face by the CEDAR fieldworker, with the interviews being recorded and transcribed.

Nine of the 36 original mentors were approached and agreed to assist in the evaluation. However, of these three of the mentors' teams withdrew from the competition in its early stages, and were unable to provide interviews as a result. Of the remaining six mentors, three eventually provided telephone interviews which were recorded and transcribed.

A representative of The Brightside Trust was interviewed face to face, and the recording was transcribed. In addition, the CEDAR fieldworker held an informal interview with a second Brightside Trust worker with specific responsibilities for online provision. The course consultant, responsible for writing the three Big Deal manuals, for students, teachers, and mentors, was interviewed by telephone, the interview being recorded and transcribed. Both NAGTY and The Brightside Trust

provided CEDAR with extensive documentation related to the planning and implementation of the Big Deal competition. Finally, the CEDAR fieldworker was in attendance throughout the Competition Day, and observed all aspects of the culmination of the Big Deal.

### **3.2. The evaluation sample.**

The target group for the Big Deal were disadvantaged students who were members of the Goal programme. However, schools were permitted to enrol non-Goal students into Goal teams where necessary to create viable Big Deal teams. NAGTY developed an enhanced method for recruiting Goal, and Big Deal, students in time for the recruitment of cohort 2, in 2006/07. A NAGTY, Goal, 'Outline of student recruitment for Goal' document stated:

'It must be ensured that disadvantaged students are effectively engaged: this includes students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and student backgrounds traditionally under-represented in Higher Education regardless of their economic status. Target ACORN groups Hard Pressed and Moderate Means'.

'In order to ensure effective targeting of appropriate students, a top down approach of recruitment will be adopted'.

'This approach will have to acknowledge that we do not know the students in schools. [School] staff will be issued with a list of identified students for registration and requested to approach these students in the first instance. They will be asked to register additional students that meet the criteria to fill the quota'.

'It is anticipated that there will have to be some fluidity in selection and, where students do not want to engage, school staff may populate the cohort with other students. This will help to accommodate the recent influx of applications and help to acknowledge that the data is one means by which need can be identified'<sup>11</sup>.

The pre-course questionnaire, completed by 38 Big Deal students, 18 girls and 20 boys, at the Big Deal Launch Day, attempted to generate some basic data concerning the backgrounds of the students. Questions were asked about ethnicity

(self-described), free school meals, and parental attendance at university (Tables 2.1 and 2.2)

Table 2.1. Backgrounds of Big Deal students, self-described ethnicity.

| Background, ethnicity | Number. |
|-----------------------|---------|
| White British         | 25      |
| White                 | 4       |
| Asian                 | 2       |
| British-Indian        | 2       |
| British-Chinese       | 1       |
| British-Asian         | 1       |
| White British Jew     | 1       |
| Mixed race            | 2       |

*N*=38

The majority of the respondents indicated that they were white British (63%), the next largest group described themselves as being of Asian background (13%), then white (11%), with small percentages identifying themselves as being of mixed origin, British-Chinese, and one white British Jew. There were no respondents of Afro-Caribbean background, and no respondent described themselves as coming from a traveller or Roma background.

Table 2.2. Backgrounds of Big Deal students, free schools meals, parental education.

| Category                        | Yes | No |
|---------------------------------|-----|----|
| In receipt of free school meals | 5   | 33 |
| Parents/guardians attended HE   | 10  | 26 |

*N*=38.

The data on free school meals may suggest that only a small percentage of the most economically disadvantaged students had been involved in the Big Deal project, although a clear majority of the respondents came from family backgrounds with no parental experience of higher education.

Schools adopted differing methods of recruiting students for the Big Deal competition. Of the schools surveyed by the CEDAR fieldworker, all but one school either drew the students from the NAGTY Goal list, or drew students for the list and added additional students who met NAGTY's criteria. One teacher in charge showed the fieldworker the NAGTY list, and explained that he had offered participation only to students on that list. Another teacher offered involvement in the Big Deal competition to students from the NAGTY Goal list, and also incorporated two NAGTY students who had recently suffered close family bereavement. In both cases, the methods of student recruitment matched closely the stated criteria. However, in one school visited, students were not chosen in line with the NAGTY Goal criteria. In this case, all NAGTY students were approached. The teacher in charge of the Big Deal competition was given a list of all NAGTY students by the school gifted and talented co-ordinator, and, in an e-mail to the CEDAR researcher explained that:

‘There was no particular system involved in choosing the teams. I was simply given a list of G and T names, called a meeting and ‘sold it to them’. [The team] are also friends, so that’s how they decided to form the team’.

The result of this undifferentiated method of recruitment was that the team in question did not appear to meet any of the criteria of disadvantage established for Goal. Of the four students in the team, all were white British (three female, one male), three of the four had parents who had both attended university, and one had one parent who had attended university. One team member had two elder siblings at the University of Cambridge, and had grandparents, as well as parents, who had attended university. In addition, one of the team members had a parent who taught at the school, while another team member was the child of a former teacher at the school. Members of the team indicated that their hobbies included ski-ing and ballet. This team went on to be the winners of the Big Deal competition.

#### **4. The Big Deal experience.**

##### **4.1. The Launch Day.**

The Big Deal Launch Day was held at the University of Warwick on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2007. The day provided basic information for students and teachers on the requirements of the Big Deal competition, along with training for the Big Deal mentors, and an extended business event that aimed to introduce the students to developing a business idea.

The Launch Day was regarded as being, overall, a success by all the students, teachers and mentors who were interviewed, and who attended the event. Some of the interviewees were particularly enthusiastic about the day, and all the interviewees felt that it was a worthwhile experience. Nonetheless, there were a small number of areas where different interviewees felt that improvements could usefully have been made.

The student interviewees all said that they enjoyed the Launch Day, particularly the business exercise, and that they found it worthwhile. Two students from one team neatly encapsulated the day's events:

Student 1. 'When we got there we had all the pleasantries, name tagged, and filled out questionnaires, and that that [name] lady explained everything about the use of the website and about the use of it [...] and then we had the [business] session, didn't we, when we had to make shoes...'

Student 2. 'We had to pretend we had a scenario where we had to take management of a failing shoe factory and make a new shoe for the next year'.

There was a clear sense among the students that they appreciated 'all the pleasantries', and that the Launch Day was held in attractive surroundings. Three of the student interviewees separately volunteered information about how 'peaceful' they found the University of Warwick campus, and how they felt that they would like to attend a university that was similar to Warwick. For example, two students commented:



*CEDAR fieldworker: Why did you say you liked Warwick?*

Student 1: 'It grows on you. I've been there a couple of times now, and every time you go you find a different aspect'.

Student 2: 'They're quite friendly as well, giving directions and that sort of stuff [...] you can see yourself living there in a couple of years'.

Teachers, too, commented about the way in which the students were made the focus of attention, and that the day was run efficiently and effectively. One teacher noted:

'It was superbly run on the day in terms of, as soon as we turned up, slowing down to turn into the right car park and the map, and everything else, we were metted and greeted – so that was good. The day for them [the students] was superb, they came away buzzing, so it really had set them up and kind of, like, had them motivated, working through'.

While another teacher commented:

'It was good.... I thought the enterprise challenge was well organised, and I think the kids really enjoyed it. It was better than they expected it to be, I think that's what I heard them saying'.

For the students, the most popular part of the Launch Day was the business experience. This presented each team with the problem of preparing a new shoe for the market, covering all aspects of the process, from buying raw materials to producing a mock-up of a shoe. The students had to absorb constantly changing market situations, such as changing fashions, current events, and changing prices (all relayed via a continuous video screen news service), while designing and preparing to market their own shoe. This activity was greatly enjoyed by the students. As one student noted:

'It was challenging. I wouldn't necessarily say that it was hard, but it was challenging, and it was good fun, and we learnt a lot, like following orders, team work, responsibility and all that'.

The teams that were interviewed all expressed similar views of the business exercise, and one team was very keen to show the CEDAR fieldworker photographs of themselves working on their shoe.

One of the key aims of the Launch Day was to convey essential information about the Big Deal requirements to the teams. While it was the case that some of the student interviewees did appreciate that the day presented them with important information, it was more common that teachers and students felt that improvement could have been made in this aspect of the day.

Two students, from the same team, explained that, prior to the Launch Day, their team did not have any real idea as to what was expected of them:

‘Because before that [the Launch Day] we were all a bit unsure, we were, like, what have we let ourselves in for?’

‘We didn’t even know what we were doing, to be honest. We weren’t into it’.

The Launch Day gave them a clearer idea about what was required of them. Nonetheless, other interviewees, teachers and students, felt that they were still not entirely sure about what was required, despite the Launch Day. One student said:

‘We left there clueless, they didn’t tell us anything’.

While this was not literally the case, it seemed that other members of the same team also felt unsure about their next moves following the Launch Day:

‘They didn’t explain it to us, we had to read from the booklet what we were doing’.

‘And I just went on the basis that it was a business enterprise again, so I just went on the the basis of what I did two years ago’ [in an earlier business competition]

‘We didn’t start until, like, we started, like, the first couple of days, but it was only about three or four weeks before we actually started doing work,

because we were never sure at all, and the resources on the net were just confusing’.

While the latter view about ‘the resources on the net’ were not typical, the teachers who were interviewed also believed that some more explanation might have usefully been given at the Launch Day. For example, teachers commented:

*CEDAR fieldworker: ‘Do you think anything could have been done on the Launch Day that would have improved it in any way?’*

Teacher: ‘Perhaps maybe explaining to them more clearly about the tasks and the breakdown of what they have to do on the actual Big Deal thing, maybe explain it in simpler terms for them. Because they came back saying, what do we do ? What do we do?’

This point was also raised by a teacher who had high praise for the Launch Day overall, but, who nonetheless said:

‘I think what I would have appreciated a little bit more was a bit more of an explanation of what the end product should have looked like, because I was given a pack which was very informative, but that was it, and kind of, like, you’re only now, when you’re working through it with the students, that I’m kind of, like, at the same step that they’re on, but. Like, a little bit ahead, but it was really good to go through the stuff. I know it was meant to be them-based totally and utterly, but I think that would be the only thing that we still aren’t totally sure what’s expected’.

The Launch Day also included training for the mentors, on the use of the Big Deal blogsite and child protection. Once that was complete, mentors were able to meet their mentees, while they were engaged on the business exercise. This was seen by the mentors who were interviewed as being a good opportunity to meet the students face to face. One of the mentors explained the strengths and weaknesses of meeting the students while they were working on their business task:

‘When we got there, they [the students] were in the throes of the final stages. It was kind of difficult talking to the kids, because they had about 30 minutes of time to finish their project, but they were running about like headless

chickens. I was trying to help, but I was getting in the way as bit. It was good to see, it was all very enthusiastic. It was a difficult time to try and chat with the kids basically, because they were so involved with what they were doing. On the other hand, it was quite nice to actually see hem, hands on, doing something. But maybe it might have bee a little bit more helpful to have met them first when they weren't hyperactive'.

Although some mentors did, subsequently, arrange visits to schools to meet their mentees, for most mentors, the Launch Day was the only opportunity to meet their mentees, with all other contact being via the Big Deal blogs.

#### **4.2. The ten weeks programme.**

##### **4.2.1. The participants' guides:**

All those involved in the Big Deal – students, teachers, and mentors – received guides to the programme and their specific role in it. The guides were written by an experienced business education consultant, whose brief was to create a week-by-week guide that would support the e-mentoring system. The consultant explained the nature of his task, and the order in which he approached it:

'The student guide and the mentor guide would have to explain what would happen each week, and what role the mentor would have to play, and what sort of role the students would be playing, their tasks and the kind of questions that they would be asking the mentor, and [...] then I sat down and wrote the student guide first, getting all the tasks clear, that they worked and were coherent, and then I wrote the mentor guide to go with it, and finally, the teacher version'.

The consultant had a number of clear principles based on successful e-mentoring schemes in the USA. These were a clear task focus, a relatively short time span for the project, and information to keep teachers involved in the event:

'that it needed to be something very focused, because a lot of the online mentoring schemes haven't worked terribly well, I don't think, because they lacked focus, they're too general and it needs to be very specific. Some of the most successful programmes in America, for example, were Hewlett Packard's e-mentoring scheme. Or the first mentoring scheme, the electronic

emissary scheme, [which] was very focused. Which is why I recommended a very focused scheme and over a short period of time’.

‘The weakness, often, of online mentoring schemes are that teachers are left out of the loop, and they just leave the kids to their own devices, and therefore the chat is very, very unfocused’.

*The Big Deal: Student Guide* provided students with a clear, and thorough, source of information about all aspects of the programme. It was divided into three sections, dealing with, in turn, ‘E-mentoring’, ‘How to use the Big Deal Blogs’, and ‘Your Weekly Tasks’. The role of mentors and teachers was clearly explained in the booklets, and students could follow the programme through by carrying out the weekly tasks, which were explained in tabular and extended prose form. For example, the student guide for ‘Week 2: Creating Ideas’ lists five tasks, such as:

2. Decide whether you want to develop a business enterprise or a social enterprise and record the reasons for your decision.

3. Most enterprise ideas are based around a solution to a problem. So first you need to think about the kind of problem you want your enterprise to tackle. This could be a problem in your local community or a problem that consumers have. Then try brainstorming a list of ideas – this is when you all call out ideas and one member of the group writes them down. Do not discuss or criticise the ideas until you have dried up and no more ideas can be added.<sup>12</sup>

The list of tasks concludes with bullet points ‘in preparation for next week’.

Both mentors and teachers received their own guides, which provided essential information, and outlined the tasks that students were expected to follow over the ten weeks of the programme. *The Big Deal: Mentor Guide* was, in particular, a detailed resource for adults new to mentoring, and provided essential information about mentoring in general along with specific information relating to the Big Deal, and e-mentoring. The three guides were an essential support element to the Big Deal programme.

#### **4.2.2: The teams in action:**

Each team interviewed had a different pattern of weekly activity. Team activity was governed by variables such as team dynamics, the role of the responsible teacher, and non-competition pressures on students' time. Although the Student Guide was utilised by all the teams in question, the degree to which the weekly task outline was followed varied from team to team.

One common factor, shared by all the teams that were interviewed, was the co-operative basis of team organisation. None of the teams organised themselves in a hierarchical fashion, and differing roles, such as market researcher, or finance manager, reflected personal interests or abilities that were acknowledged by all the team. Flat organisational structures, and group decision-making, appeared to have been the norm among the teams interviewed. For example, one team described their organisational structure as follows:

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'So, how have you actually organised yourselves as a little company?'*

Student 1: 'We just sort of get on with it really'.

*CEDAR: 'So no-one's the boss then?'*

Student 2: 'No, not really. No'.

Student 3: 'Because we find it easier if we are all equal'.

Student 1: 'Some people are in charge of different areas, but there's no person in charge for the main thing'.

*CEDAR: 'So which people are in charge of which areas then?'*

Student 2: '[Name] does everything technical. I do the market research, and general kind of help people'.

Student 1: 'I do sponsorships and just sort of input everywhere'.

Student 2: 'And some of the marketing as well'.

*CEDAR: 'Is anybody doing finance?'*

Student 1 '[Name] is doing the finance'.

This pattern of organisation was also repeated with the other teams, with another team explaining how their personal interests governed their choice of role within the team, which they formalised with titles and individual business cards:

Student 1: 'We've all got really good qualities. We first of all took it upon ourselves to give ourselves job titles, and sort of set deadlines for each individual person'.

Student 2: 'It was sort of what anyone wanted really. Who could do what, and who could do it best'.

*CEDAR: 'So it wasn't one of you saying, "you do that, and you do that" ?'*

Student 1: 'We sort of said, "I think [name] will be better because he is good at design and manufacture, because he's good at DT and all that rubbish"'.  
'

The task that teams found the most difficult was choosing a business idea. The teams were aware that they had to develop an idea that was both practicable for them (given, for example, limits on time and the £20 seed capital grant from the project), and one that had the potential to be developed and marketed. Some teams took a long time to develop a viable idea. One team, interviewed during the seventh week of the competition had not, at that stage, settled on an idea:

Student 1: 'We've been throwing in an awful lot of ideas, but we rejected a lot of the through evaluation'.

Student 2: 'We've rejected all of them'.

Student 1: 'Some of them we were quite happy with, but we were looking for something really simplistic, very innovative and bold. We don't want to rush into anything without exploring all the options'.

Student 3: 'We know we haven't completely come up with a final idea, which is quite bad'.

Nevertheless, this team did develop an idea in time for the Competition Day, and presented it effectively to the judges.

The other teams used the brainstorming techniques suggested in the Student Guide, for example:

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'How did you decide what your actual project was going to be?'*

Student: 'Brain storms. We had a couple, about two or three, brainstorming sessions where we wrote out all our ideas, pros and cons for each one,

weighed them up, and eventually after we decided all the information, we chose our product’.

In another case, a team thought of a number of ideas, which they then narrowed down by using market research tools. One team did market research interviews with 100 people, and found that 96 respondents were interested in the product. Nonetheless, the team was aware that a more effective process might have been to undertake market research first:

Student 1: ‘The only thing that we asked [ourselves], when we did it, we’d decided on the product before we did the market research which was...’

Student 2: ‘Kind of a bad idea’.

Student 3: ‘But it turned out OK’. [...]

Student 1: ‘We came up with a set of ideas, and using our market research to determine between them’.

Student 4: ‘We knew that there wasn’t many types of this [...] on the market, and so we actually used that’ .

This team’s awareness of business practice, and their flexibility in developing an idea, appeared to be reasonably representative of other teams in the competition.

Each team interviewed displayed a differing pattern of weekly activity. At one end of a spectrum of activity, one team met regularly, and formally, once a week after school, while, at the other end of the activity spectrum, another team rarely met formally, but maintained a running dialogue among the team members as they met up during the school day.

In one school, the responsible teacher had arranged a fixed time, immediately after the end of the school day, for the school’s Big Deal teams to meet for an hour. The room had computer terminals, and was sub-divided so that the different teams had space to themselves. This proved to be a successful arrangement, and the team members met regularly, with each meeting focused on the relevant stage of the project as outlined in the Student Guide. This contrasted with another team that had very few formal meetings, but discussed their project, as a group of friends, during the school day. All the teams found that as they drew nearer the Competition Day, so they had to meet more frequently, to continue developing their projects, and to prepare their presentations for the Competition Day



'[At first] we met up Thursday lunchtimes, but then after that we went to Tuesday and Thursday lunch times, and in the last few weeks we just met every single day to get it done'.

Two of the teams interviewed made notable contacts with individuals outside their schools. In the case of one of the teams (not the winning team), they took their business idea to a local entrepreneur who agreed to finance its development. The other team made a number of external contacts while the competition was running, drawing upon parents and other adults to help them with their project:

Student 1: 'My dad's been helping me with the practical stuff as well, because my dad's in an electronics company, that's where he works'.

Student 2: 'My mum's boss actually went through our business plan, and made some comments, and gave us some tips'.

Student 3 'So, basically, they [parents and adults] have been very supportive'.

#### **4.2.3: The role of teachers:**

All the teachers interviewed were aware that the Big Deal projects were to be fully owned by the students involved, and the teachers were keen that the students be allowed to gain the maximum educational benefit from independent working. Nonetheless, a good deal of time was spent by the teachers undertaking the necessary facilitating work – from completing administration and arranging transport to the Launch and Competition Days, to booking rooms, and monitoring progress. All the students who were interviewed said that their teachers had been helpful, but the students were quite clear that they had full ownership of their projects. This was reflected in the teachers' comments too, for example, one teacher explained:

'I don't think that there's much more the school could have done. We've taken them off timetable, we've supported them, there's different things there. I think if we did any more we'd be in danger of it being a teacher-run task, and what we've been determined to do is that it is run by them, they're the ones saying, "we need time", they're the ones saying, "we need this". My conversations with them have always been, "how's it going, what's happening, do you

know...?” those sorts of questions, rather than, “you need to do this, you need to do that”.

Nonetheless, in one case, the teacher commented on the need to keep the students focused on tasks, and time keeping, as well as providing more general advice and support:

‘To tell you the truth, it’s a lot of extra work for me. I mean from the way it was sold at the [launch] day, it was supposed to be that the mentor from [company name] was supposed to give [the students] advice, but the kids seem a bit lost, so I’m giving them a lot of advice. I don’t think they fully know what they’re doing as well. So I’ve had to give them ideas, what kinds of things, organising together. The kind of advice a mentor should give them, I’m actually giving’.

This interviewee was the teacher with responsibility for the team that had difficulties in deciding on a product.

#### ***4.3. E-Mentoring and the Big Deal Blogs.***

The Big Deal Blogs provided the students with a range of resources to support them in the competitions. The electronic interface provided the forum where teams and students posted to, and received posts from, their business mentors. In addition, the site provided a frequently updated library of articles on business, competition, education, and personal topics. Library articles were categorised under six headings: business careers, enterprise, advice for life, tips for success, study skills, and enterprise challenge resources. This library of resources aimed to provide accessible information on a range of issues, not just business and the competition, that could be of interest to the Big Deal students. In this, the site mirrored the role of the mentors. The mentors were not only envisaged as providing experienced business support for the teams in the competition, but were also there to answer individual students’ questions concerning, for example, educational choices, careers, and universities. *The Big Deal Mentor Guide* included a clear statement of this dual role:

‘A key aspect of your role [as a mentor] will be to provide encouragement and motivation . You will be trying to help your students become more aware of their ability to succeed. Along with support and guidance with each of the weekly tasks, they might also need support and guidance in understanding

the range of employment or training options and opportunities for further and higher education open to them. It is likely that they will be interested in your role and how you got there!’<sup>13</sup>

Overall, the data generated by both the post-competition student questionnaire, and the interviews with students, teachers, and mentors, suggested that the e-mentoring system was an effective method of providing mentoring for the students. There were, nonetheless, clear indications that the students were much more likely to utilise mentor support for Big Deal competition tasks, rather than for non-competition issues related to careers, higher education, or school issues.

The post-competition questionnaire asked respondents nine questions relating to the online mentoring and four questions relating to the Big Deal Blogs in general. The online mentoring questions fell into three sub-categories, dealing with the online mentor, advice sought and given about the Big Deal project, and personal advice about, for example, careers and school issues. All the respondents either ‘agreed’ (23 of 38) or ‘strongly agreed’ (15 of 38) that having an online mentor was a good idea, while there was a mixed response to the question, ‘do you think your mentor was friendly and easy to talk to online’, but with the majority of respondents agreeing with the statement (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Responses to the question: do you think that your mentor was friendly and easy to talk to online?

|                   | Frequency |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Strongly agree    | 14        |
| Agree             | 17        |
| Disagree          | 4         |
| Strongly disagree | 1         |
| Don't know        | 2         |

*N*=38

The students were encouraged to post messages to their mentors as frequently as possible, so a dialogue could be built up between the students and the mentor. It was expected that each team would post, at a minimum, at least once a week. The post-competition question indicated that 62% of respondents posted messages to their mentors more than once a week (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Responses to the question: do you think your team exchanged messages with your mentor frequently (i.e., more than once a week)?

|                   | Frequency |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Strongly agree    | 11        |
| Agree             | 12        |
| Disagree          | 7         |
| Strongly disagree | 3         |
| Don't know        | 4         |

*N*=38

The overwhelming majority of respondents (68.5%) indicated that their mentors gave their teams a great deal of advice via the e-mentoring system (Table 4.3)

Table 4.3. Responses to the question: do you think that your mentor gave your team a great deal of advice about your 'Big Deal' project?

|                   | Frequency |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Strongly agree    | 8         |
| Agree             | 18        |
| Disagree          | 7         |
| Strongly disagree | 3         |
| Don't know        | 2         |

*N* = 38

The student interviews gave some indication about the quality of the online mentor contact and advice. One team noted that their mentor had replied quickly to their posts, and had been helpful:

'We've done some individual stuff [on the blog] and then we've come together and pulled ideas together as a group [on the blog], and she [the mentor] has replied on all occasions and she's been really helpful. She gives really extensive answers for us, giving us things to think about, and it really has been helpful, which is nice'.

Two other teams gave contrasting accounts of the effectiveness of different mentors. One team's account of e-contact with their mentor suggested that the mentor was

following a positive model of mentoring, which was characterised by astute questioning and the provision of alternatives for the team to discuss and consider:

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'Now you said that you'd had quite good feedback from your mentor. What sort of thing, and how often have you posted her?'*

Student 1: 'Every couple of days, twice a week, or once a week at the least'.

*CEDAR: 'And does she reply quite quickly?'*

Student 1: 'Yeah, She always reads it on Tuesday or Friday'.

*CEDAR: 'And does she tell you exactly what to do, or does she...'*

Student 1: 'She suggests things so we have to work...she doesn't say, "do this", do this"'

Student 2: 'She expects us to infer from her messages what to do, so she doesn't tell us the way, but sort of gives us a light that helps expand our vision, speaking metaphorically'.

This account of successful and valued e-mentoring, contrasted with a different account given by another team:

Student 1: 'If we don't know, for example, we didn't know how to write a business plan, so we've asked if she [the mentor] can give us some tips on it'.

Student 2: 'But she does kind of copy out of the book' [the Student Guide]

Student 1: 'Yeah, she just actually reads the tasks from our handbooks'.

Student 2: 'So she's just telling us what we already know, which doesn't help us with any problems'.

Student 3: 'She's only there once a week or something'.

The final comment, by student 3 of that team, raised the issue of the speed of mentors' responses. The need to monitor the interchanges between students and mentors, and the other demands on both students' and mentors' time meant that one problem that was commented upon by the majority of interviewees was the frequency of time lags in the e-conversations. Commenting on how useful they had found a visit to see their mentor at his offices, one team noted:

'That was worthwhile, because we could actually show him. It's, like, online it would take another day after day to respond, and we couldn't exactly show him the presentation, and get proper feedback on it, we just had to tell him what was on it.'

This point was also made by a different mentor, who visited her mentees at their school:

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'Did you find that [the school visit] useful?'*

Mentor: 'Yes, very, very useful I thought. Because the online interface is really quite hard, because, one week they have a idea, and you think that's the idea they are going with, so you have thoughts about it, tell them about it, to then realise that they have decided on something else [...] when you are actually sat there, face to face with them, they can bounce their ideas off you a lot more than they do, perhaps, on the interface'.

The mentors were encouraged to provide individual students with advice and information about school, university, and careers matters, in addition to advice and guidance about the Big Deal project itself. The questionnaire responses indicated that this aspect of the e-mentoring system was less utilised than the competition aspect of the postings, with the exception of mentors telling their mentees about working in the business sector (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Personal guidance provided by e-mentors.

| Mentor advice on:     | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| school issues         | 4              | 5     | 14       | 9                 | 6          |
| choosing courses*     | 2              | 9     | 13       | 9                 | 4          |
| choosing universities | 1              | 5     | 14       | 10                | 8          |
| future careers        | 3              | 9     | 12       | 9                 | 5          |
| Working in business   | 5              | 15    | 6        | 8                 | 4          |

*N=38, except \* where N=37.*

With the exception of mentor posts about working in business, the questionnaire data suggested that the majority of students did not enter into e-conversations with their

mentors about school, course, university, or career questions that affected them personally.

The post-competition questionnaire also sought to identify the degree to which teams had used the variety of resources on the Big Deal blogsite. These included articles and links or relevance to the competition, and running a business. The questionnaire responses suggested that the teams did use these resources on the blogsite (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Use of resources on the Big Deal blogsite.

| Would you say that you and your team:  | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|------------|
| Became familiar with all the articles on the site at the start of the competition. | 6              | 14    | 14       | 4          |
| Kept up to date with the articles that were posted throughout the competition.     | 4              | 22    | 10       | 2          |
| Thought that it was good idea for relevant information to be on the site.          | 18             | 18    | 1        | 1          |

*N*=38.

The data indicated that having resources on the site was regarded by the students as being a good idea, with 36 of the 38 respondents agreeing that 'it was a good idea for relevant information to be on the site'. The differences in the number of respondents who indicated that they and their teams were familiar with the articles on the site at the beginning of the competition (20 of 38 respondents), and those who became familiar with additional articles throughout the competition (26 of 38) may have been a reflection of the fairly typical pattern of the teams becoming more active as the competition progressed.

All the student and mentor posts were monitored by the Brightside Trust, and statistics were gathered on site activity. The Brightside Trust saw the Big Deal Blogs

as a pilot for future e-mentoring developments, and, as such, felt that it had been a valuable learning experience. Final statistics of site activity indicated a high level of usage by students and mentors (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Big Deal Blogs final statistics report<sup>14</sup>

| Users/activity                  | Number |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Mentees/students                | 130    |
| Mentors                         | 38     |
| Schools                         | 24     |
| Site visits                     | 3427   |
| Page views                      | 26,442 |
| Average page views per visit    | 7.72   |
| Number of mentee/student logins | 1,901  |
| Number of mentor logins         | 1,271  |
| Number of mentee/student posts  | 976    |
| Number of mentor posts          | 798    |
| Number of teams at start        | 35     |
| Number of teams at finish       | 22     |

The Brightside Trust compiled status reports on the progress of individual teams and their exchanges with their mentors. The final status reports, compiled the day before the Competition Day, indicated that there was a range of team experience, and varied levels of input from students and mentors; for example:

‘Their idea is for a virtual youth group based upon the internet in which members can talk to others who share interests, but they haven’t posted since the end of June despite the mentor’s efforts, so not sure where they have got to’.

‘Great mentoring relationship. Regular contact and good support from [mentor]. Their idea is for advertising on toilet roll – slightly worried about fitting the presentation and business plan into the last few days, but I’m sure they’ll manage’.



'Last mentee post June 14<sup>th</sup> and they were worried about work load then. Mentor hasn't posted since May 24<sup>th</sup>'.

'They all seemed to put a lot of work in (the mentor was great!) but finally decided to drop out due to time and not feeling prepared. Left on a good note with mentor though'.

'[Mentor] has done a great job in getting this team going. He had a meeting with them, and I think they're sorted for the event. Still am not clear on what their enterprise idea is though'.

'Brilliant constructive relationship. Mentees are very grateful and they're all set for the 14<sup>th</sup> [Competition Day]'<sup>15</sup>

The Brightside Trust were pleased with the outcome of the blog site, believing that they had learnt important lessons about working with business mentors, monitoring personal posts between students and mentors, and providing support to students to keep them focused on task, with a Brightside Trust manager commenting:

'It has been interesting. Because we've spent so much time prompting the kids, e-mailing, and mentees, and really pushing them, and keeping on top of it, and knowing where they are each week. I think that it has really helped, because the facilitation is so important, [...] you can't leave them to just get on with it, someone has to be there to push them along. [...] with the mentors, that has been a learning curve, because we hadn't worked very much with the sort of professionals, the business professionals, before, and I do think that we've discovered that they have a very different outlook on things [than other mentors the trust had previously worked with]'.

Final postings by students and mentors, following the Competition Day, also indicated that some good relationships had been built up through the e-mentoring system. Two farewell postings from students to their mentors provide examples:

'Thanks once again for all your help throughout the competition. You kept us on task and provided us with valuable information every week. Thank you again'.

‘Personally, I thought we did very good in our presentation although we didn’t get very far, but I enjoyed the experience a lot and hope to do something like this again in the near future. You also helped us a lot and it is funny how we have talked to you for the past ten weeks and we still don’t know and never will know how you look.’<sup>16</sup>

#### **4.4. The Competition Day**

The culmination of the programme was The Big Deal Business Conference – the Competition Day- held at the Aston Business School, Aston University, on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> July. The Aston Business School is a newly built, high quality venue. Twenty-two teams attended the Competition Day. Following introductions, the teams were split into two groups for the competition heats which took place during the morning. Each team made their 10 minute presentation to a panel of judges in closed session. The judges were high profile figures drawn from business and education. While the teams were waiting to make their presentations they took part in an evaluation workshop where they were introduced to evaluation tools that they used to assess their Big Deal experience. Following lunch, the four finalists were announced, and they each gave their presentations in open session before all the other teams and the combined panel of judges. Finally, a single winning team was announced. A CEDAR fieldworker was present throughout the day, and attended ten of the closed sessions (from both groups), and the final presentations.

##### **4.4.1. The teams’ presentations**

All the presentations observed by the CEDAR fieldworker exhibited high presentation standards. The students were uniformly enthusiastic, informed, and well prepared. The teams combined clear, focused explanations of their projects, and business ideas, with engaging presentations that utilised a variety of methods – Power Point slides, short films, handouts, and group presentations. The business ideas included revision packs for primary schools, a chat room monitor, individualised online recipes, environmental business support, an online cv service, car safety kits, and an audio pod cast magazine.

The judges used a scoring proforma, which highlighted six aspects of enterprise on which the teams were judged. The criteria was built around business plans, ideas, use of mentors, learning, and presentations (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. The Big Deal: National Enterprise Competition, Competition Day criteria.

| Aspect                                 | Criteria   |
|--|--|
| Idea<br>(out of 15)                    | How original or interesting is the idea?<br>How well do the prototype/marketing materials sell the idea? |
| Business planning<br>(out of 20)       | How clear, complete and convincing is the business plan and budget?                                      |
| Presentation content<br>(out of 15)    | How concise, clear and imaginative was the content of the presentation?                                  |
| Presentation delivery<br>(our of 15)   | How professional, lively and engaging was the presentation. Was the whole team involved?                 |
| Learning outcomes<br>(out of 20)       | How well did the team develop enterprise skills?<br>How well did they reflect on their learning?         |
| Effective use of mentor<br>(out of 15) | How well did the team use their mentor?  |

The proforma was not released to the teams, but it matched the list recommended for the presentation in the final week of tasks contained in *The Big Deal: Student Guide*<sup>17</sup>.

## 5. The Impact of The Big Deal.

The pre and post project questionnaires contained questions that aimed to establish student expectations of the Big Deal matched to the experience of having taken part in the competition. Under the heading of 'Working in a Big Deal team', respondents were asked about their expectations and experience of skills acquisition and the experience of Big Deal work, (Table 5.1). The respondents were chosen in a random fashion at the Big Deal Launch Day, and at the Big Deal Competition Day. No attempt was made to ensure that the same students filled in a questionnaire both times; 39 questionnaires were completed at the Launch Day, and 38 at the Competition Day.

Table 5.1. Working in a Big Deal team, pre and post project student responses.

| Expectation/<br><i>experience</i> | Strongly agree |           | Agree |           | Disagree |          | Strongly disagree |      | Don't know |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------------|------|------------|----------|
|                                   | Pre            | Post      | Pre   | Post      | Pre      | Post     | Pre               | Post | Pre        | Post     |
| An enjoyable time                 | 9              | <b>13</b> | 26    | <b>23</b> | 1        | <b>1</b> | 1                 | 0    | 2          | <b>1</b> |
| Work/ed hard                      | 19             | <b>22</b> | 17    | <b>13</b> |          | <b>2</b> | 0                 | 0    | 3          | <b>1</b> |
| Learn/t new team working skills   | 9              | <b>10</b> | 27    | <b>26</b> | 1        | <b>2</b> | 0                 | 0    | 2          | 0        |
| Learn/t new organizational skills | 10             | <b>9</b>  | 26    | <b>26</b> | 1        | <b>3</b> | 0                 | 0    | 2          | 0        |
| Learn/t new planning skills       | 8              | <b>7</b>  | 29    | <b>29</b> | 0        | <b>2</b> | 0                 | 0    | 2          | 0        |
| Learn/t new communication skills  | 10             | <b>8</b>  | 26    | <b>26</b> | 1        | <b>2</b> | 0                 | 0    | 1          | <b>2</b> |
| Learn/t new financial skills      | 10             | <b>12</b> | 26    | <b>23</b> |          | <b>2</b> | 1                 | 0    | 2          | <b>1</b> |
| Learn/t new presentation skills   | 11             | <b>17</b> | 23    | <b>17</b> |          | <b>2</b> | 0                 | 0    | 5          | <b>2</b> |

The student questionnaires gave a picture of the student group having their expectations met by their experience of the Big Deal programme. Allowing for the discrepancy of one between the number of pre and post project respondents, there was a close match in all categories between expectations and experience. For example, ten respondents 'strongly agreed' that they expected to learn new organizational skills, and nine respondents 'strongly agreed' that they had learnt new organizational skills; the corresponding figures for respondents 'agreeing' in this case were 26 for the pre-project question and 26 for the post-project question. The most notable difference between expectations and experience related to the acquisition of new presentation skills. In this case, 11 of the pre-project respondents 'strongly agreed' that they would learn new presentation skills and 23 'agreed' that they would. Of the post-project respondents, 17 'strongly agreed' that they had, in fact, learnt new presentation skills, and 17 'agreed' that they had. In this case expectations were more than fulfilled.

The interviews with students, teachers and mentors provided further detail concerning the impact of the Big Deal experience. The mentors were particularly aware of the business-related skills that they believed the students acquired. For example, one mentor commented:

'I think that they are learning a lot of the techniques of business that you wouldn't necessarily pick up on unless you decided to go along the business studies A level, GCSE route [...] it is very surprising how many of these techniques are actually used in the real world, so I think that they've probably learned a lot about business in the sense of the techniques that are used in the report-writing and presentation-type skills'.

A teacher, with a background in teaching business and economics, also noted that the students in one of the school's teams were acquiring business skills 'whether they know it or not'. He went on to say:

'I think it's [the Big Deal] good, because it gets them thinking, develops enterprise skills or creativity, innovation, and team work, communication, so it hits a lot of enterprise skills'.

Another teacher was keen to stress the learning process that the team had undergone, learning to work with a group of people on a project that they had sole responsibility for:

'I think it has gone very well, I think that it has been a really good experience for them and I think the best experience for them has been working together as a group, developing that group dynamic, not knowing what they were doing [at first], and falling out, and gradually coming together as a team, and starting to identify roles within the team. They have done it entirely themselves, they have done, it seems to me, a pretty good job [...] What is important is that they have had the autonomous experience of working together as a group with a real-life, as it were, problem, and getting on doing it, all that developing their group work'.

These views were also mirrored in the accounts that the students gave of their Big Deal experience. All the teams interviewed talked about how they organised themselves, the difficulties they had, and how they had overcome difficulties, and the skills they thought they had developed. In a few cases, it seems that some teams were unable to resolve differences, illustrating that the development of cohesive teams was not an automatic, or easy, matter. One mentor explained how the team she was responsible for fell out, and began to argue on the blog site. The mentor found herself taking on the role of an arbitrator, which she found difficult. But the mentor also believed that the problems the team experienced proved to be a valuable learning experience:

'The group [team] has now fallen out, and they're online having arguments, which I am trying to mediate; it's awful. I think that what has happened really is that [...] they've just kind of sat on it, and not done anything, and they've all of a sudden realised the 14<sup>th</sup> July [Competition Day] is approaching, they haven't done any work, so now they are all bickering, blaming each other for the fact that they are not going to be able to get anything done [...] they were really getting cross with each other [...] It is interesting, because they are learning a lot, but not the way I thought they were going to [...] I've said, "differences of opinion will always arise when you are working with people you don't necessarily see eye-to-eye with" [...] they are not going to get a chance to go to New York because they didn't work hard enough, so there is a moral to that story [for them]"

Other teams were more successful in managing differences within their teams, and explained that they had had problems, but had successfully negotiated them. For example, one team found that they initially had one dominant member, but the team developed a group dynamic that overcame this problem, and created, in the CEDAR fieldworker's view, an integrated group of students with a strong team identity.

The student questionnaires also sought to identify the impact of participation in the Big Deal on the acquisition of skills that students believed were applicable to their school and post school lives, and attempted to establish whether the project impacted upon students' interest in a business career. In the latter case, the questionnaire responses indicated that involvement in the Big Deal appeared to boost students' interest a business career (Table 5.2). Whereas nine respondents did not know at the outset whether or not the Big Deal would make them more interested in a business career, only one respondent felt, at the end of the project, that they did not know, while the figures for 'strongly agreeing' and 'agreeing' with the statement related to interest in a business career showed increases, from seven to nine, and 18 to 21 respectively; although an additional two respondents indicated that participation had not made them more interested in a business career.

The Big Deal experience also seemed to have enabled the students to have acquired new skills that they felt were applicable to both school and the post-school world (Table 5.2). The figures for respondents 'strongly agreeing' that the Big Deal had provided them with new skills for school, and for post-school careers both showed increases from the pre to the post-course questionnaire. Interestingly, the questionnaire data relating to the use of the e-mentor resource was further confirmed by the questionnaire data on the wider impact of the Big Deal, with expectations about obtaining advice that was important to respondents not being matched by the actual experience – with six respondents 'strongly agreeing' that they expected to obtain such advice, 26 'agreeing', one 'disagreeing', and six 'didn't know', whereas after the project the pattern was only three 'strongly agreeing', 23 'agreeing', six 'disagreeing', three 'strongly disagreeing', that they had obtained important advice from the mentor, and two 'didn't know'. Finally, although expectations that the experience of the Big Deal would change their ideas about their futures were not entirely fulfilled, nonetheless, three respondents 'strongly agreed', and 14 'agreed' that their ideas about their futures were changed by the Big Deal experience (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Wider impacts of participation in The Big Deal.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree     | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |          |   |          |    |          |
|--|----------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|------------|----------|---|----------|----|----------|
| Make/made you more interested in a business career   | 7              | <b>9</b>  | 18       | <b>21</b>         | 5          | <b>6</b> | 0 | <b>1</b> | 9  | <b>1</b> |
| Provide/d you with new skills for school             | 9              | <b>12</b> | 24       | <b>25</b>         | 0          | 0        | 0 | <b>1</b> | 6  | 0        |
| Provide/d you with new skills for post-school career | 9              | <b>11</b> | 24       | <b>24</b>         | 0          | 0        | 0 | <b>2</b> | 5  | <b>1</b> |
| Obtain/ed important advice from mentor               | 6              | <b>3</b>  | 26       | <b>23</b>         | 1          | <b>6</b> | 0 | <b>3</b> | 6  | <b>2</b> |
| Change/d your ideas about your future                | 4              | <b>3</b>  | 20       | <b>14</b>         | 2          | <b>9</b> | 2 | <b>5</b> | 11 | <b>6</b> |

Note. Pre project responses in black N=39, **post project responses in red N=38.**

The students were aware that the project was an opportunity to develop skills that were useful both for school and beyond. For example, students from one team commented:

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'Do you feel you've learned about business doing this?'*

Student 1: 'Yeah, there's no background in business [for their year group]'



Student 2: 'Yeah, a lot more. We wouldn't really learn anything now in this year. Most of us are doing business studies at GCSE [in the next school year]'

Student 1 'It's easier, we're sort of ahead of people, we know what certain things do'.

Student 3: 'By the end of this we'll have an idea of marketing, business plans, finance'.

Student 1: 'We'll have experience of running a company, well, trying to run a company'.

Another student from a different team noted, for example, that being involved in the Big Deal was beneficial because:

'Of the element of working in a team, being a team player and meeting deadlines, sort of business-orientated sort of tasks that you could actually use in the real world'.

The post-project questionnaire indicated that in relation to the respondents desire to stay at school or college beyond GCSE, their subject choices at AS and A2 level, their desire to attend university, and their views about degree choices were all positively affected for the majority of respondents (table 5.3). For example, ten respondents indicated that they 'strongly agreed' that the Big Deal experience had increased their desire to attend university, and 23 'agreed' that it had. Similarly, the Big Deal experience affected 16 students' views about degree courses – two 'strongly agreed', and 14 'agreed'. The fact that the Big Deal experience had boosted the desire of 33 of the respondents in the desire to attend university was interesting, as this group of students already exhibited a high level of motivation for university, with 33 of the pre-course respondents indicating that they wanted to attend university – 28 'strongly agreeing', and five 'agreeing'.

Table 5.3. Students' futures and The Big Deal, responses to the post-project questionnaire.

| Would you say that being involved in the Big Deal has:                          | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Increased your desire to stay at school after your GCSEs?                       | 7              | 19    | 2        | 1                 | 8          |
| Affected your views about subject choices at AS and A2?                         | 4              | 13    | 12       | 2                 | 5          |
| Increased your desire to attend university?                                     | 10             | 23    | 2        | 0                 | 2          |
| Affected your views about what subject/s you would like to study at university? | 2              | 14    | 12       | 3                 | 6          |

*N* = 38

The interviews with teams all showed that involvement with Big Deal, and, more widely, with the NAGTY opportunities opened by membership of Goal, and with school arranged visits, enthused students for university attendance. Students talked about visits to the universities of Warwick, Aston, Oxford, Cambridge, Leicester, Derby, and York. One exchange between the CEDAR fieldworker and one team gave an insight into the impact of visits to universities on school students with no family background of higher education:

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'What did you think of New College?' [Oxford]*

Student 1: 'I thought it was quite good. It was very clean. I do like the fact that they filmed a bit of Harry Potter there. It was quite nice, looked a bit calm, the students looked alright'.

Student 2: 'I preferred York because there was all this open space on the campus'.

Student 1: 'Actually, I preferred Warwick to be honest'.

Student 3: Warwick was brilliant.

*CEDAR fieldworker: Why did you say you liked Warwick?*

Student 3: 'It grows on you. I've been there a couple of times now, and every time you go you find a different aspect'.

Student 1: 'They're quite friendly as well, giving directions and that sort of stuff'.

Student 3: 'It's easy to find everything'.

Student 1: 'You can see yourself living there in a couple of years'.

*CEDAR fieldworker: 'Are you all thinking of going to university?'*

All students: 'Definitely!'

## **6. Overview and Recommendations.**

The Big Deal programme was an efficiently run, well-organised and popular competition that saw the successful piloting of blog-based e-mentoring. The ten week project drew together small school teams from around England in an engaging and challenging business education competition. It provided a successful link-up between high-quality business mentors and gifted and talented school students. Students, teachers, and mentors all indicated that they believed that the Big Deal was a valuable, and enjoyable, educational experience. The programme exhibited some notable positive aspects, and some weaker points, while some participants made interesting recommendations for future Big Deal competitions.

### **6.1. The Big Deal programme - strengths.**

The Big Deal programme 2007 exhibited some notable strengths:

- The programme was efficiently managed by both NAGTY and The Brightside Trust.
- The programme was a high quality programme, with, for example, students experiencing high-status environments at both the Big Deal Launch Day at the University of Warwick, and the Competition Day at Aston Business School, Aston University.
- Students were provided with high quality resources to enable them to participate effectively in the Big Deal. Both the student booklet and the e-resources were essential to the success of the programme.
- Teachers and mentors were able to access clear information about their supporting roles - provided at the Launch Day briefings, online, and in the form of Big Deal booklets.
- The e-mentoring structure proved to be a robust tool, and provided an effective system for students and mentors to communicate regularly.
- The majority of students engaged in the Big Deal met the criteria, in terms of their backgrounds, set out by NAGTY and The Brightside Trust.
- The majority of students experienced an autonomous educational project. Most teams owned their project, with mentors and teachers playing a facilitating and supporting role only.

### **6.2. The Big Deal programme - issues.**

A number of issues arose in relation to The Big Deal programme 2007 which may need to be addressed for future presentations of the competition:

- Although the majority of students appear to have been drawn from those groups identified as being at risk of under-achievement, the fact that some schools did not focus on these groups led to some anomalies. This resulted in an atypical group of students winning the competition - a student team that did not meet any of the criteria established by NAGTY, or the focus of The Brightside Trust's work.
- Some students and mentors believed that there were some minor problems with the operation of the Big Deal Blogsite. These problems concerned time lags in receiving messages posted by students and mentors, difficulties experienced by mentors in receiving notices of new postings, and limited web capacity, with students not being able to post word documents to mentors. These difficulties appear to have been related to the monitoring protocols established by The Brightside Trust, and may be difficult to resolve, given issues of child protection.
- Some teachers and mentors did not appear to fully grasp the student-led nature of the competition, and sought to lead teams, rather than providing facilitation and support alone.

### **6.3. The Big Deal programme - recommendations.**

There are a number of recommendations with regard to the future presentations of The Big Deal:

- The choice of students needs to be more clearly regulated by the competition organisers. Schools need to be clearly informed about the target group being students at risk of under-achievement.
- There is scope for the further development of the e-mentoring structures. Mentor interviewees identified a number of issues here: no e-mail or text alerts were received by some mentors indicating new postings by students; the blog site was a little difficult to navigate, in particular, the drop down menu bar was of limited usefulness. Another mentor noted: 'through the interface that we talk through at the moment there is no way of them [the students] sending you the work they've done. So, for

instance, when they were doing their marketing and they formulated a questionnaire, there was no way of them running it past me, without going through the teacher route [...] it was quite hard to tell them how their presentation should be without seeing how they are making their slides [...] so I thought it would be better if there was some way of sharing files that they were producing.

- Post-Competition Day feedback (using the judges' score sheets) to all the teams that made a presentation to the judges may well be useful to round off the students' learning experience, and for helping schools prepare for future competitions.
- Some teachers and mentors indicated that a clearer and more detailed exposition of their roles needed to be made at the Launch Day.
- The facilitating and advisory role of teachers in this student-led programme needs to be further stressed.

## **7. Conclusion.**

The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition, 2007, was a successful programme that engaged 35 teams from 23 schools in 10 Local Authorities. At the outset, 120 Year 9-10 students, members of NAGTY and Goal, entered the competition, 79 students, from 22 teams, and 15 schools, made it to the final Competition Day after ten weeks of enterprise project work. The Big Deal was a positive and enjoyable business learning experience for the students involved, and enabled them to take advantage of an effective and high quality e-mentoring scheme facilitated by The Brightside Trust and NAGTY. The Big Deal model is a sustainable model of business education for gifted and talented school students, and the 2007 competition laid strong foundations for future Big Deal competitions.

**Appendices.**

**'The Big Deal'**

**Launch Day student questionnaire, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2007.**

This questionnaire is part of the independent evaluation of 'The Big Deal' that is being carried out by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), the University of Warwick. Completion of the questionnaire is voluntary, but it will greatly help the evaluation process if you do complete it. The questionnaires are anonymous and confidential.

**1. About Yourself:**

- a) Age:..... b) Year Group at School:.....
- c) Gender: male/female (*delete as applicable*)
- d) How do you describe your ethnicity: .....
- e) Do you qualify for free school meals: Yes No (*delete as applicable*)
- f) Did your parent/s or guardian/s go to university or polytechnic: Yes No (*delete as applicable*)
- g) I have been a member of NAGTY since.....

**2. Becoming involved in 'The Big Deal':**

- a) How did you first find out about 'The Big Deal'? (please tick one box):
  - i) From NAGTY
  - ii) From a teacher at school
  - iii) From a friend
  - iv) From a parent/guardian

b) Using the space below, please briefly outline why you decided to take part in 'The Big Deal':

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



[Questions 3-7 had a five option answer framework : 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', 'Don't know'.]

### **3. Working in a 'Big Deal' team:**

Thinking about the next ten weeks, and working with other students in your 'Big Deal' team, do you think that *(Please tick one answer in each row)*:

- a) you will have an enjoyable time.
- b) you will have to put plenty of effort into the programme.
- c) you will learn new team working skills.
- d) you will learn new organisational skills.
- e) you will learn new planning skills.
- f) you will learn new communications skills.
- g) you will learn new financial and budgeting skills.
- h) you will learn new presentation skills.

### **4. Working with a business mentor:**

Throughout your involvement with 'The Big Deal' you will have e-contact with a professional business mentor. Thinking about your expectations of that mentoring, do you think that *(Please tick one answer in each row)*:

- a) having an online mentor is a good idea.
- b) your mentor will be friendly and easy to talk to online.
- c) you will exchange messages with your mentor frequently (i.e., more than once a week).
- d) your mentor will be able to give you a great deal of advice about your 'Big Deal' project.
- e) your mentor will be able to give you personal advice about school work and school-related issues.
- f) your mentor will be able to give you advice about choosing courses related to your future.
- g) your mentor will be able to give you advice about choosing universities and university courses.
- h) your mentor will be able to give you advice about your future career.
- i) your mentor will be able to tell you about working in the business sector.

### **5. 'The Big Deal Blogs'.**

The online facility, 'The Big Deal Blogs', will be a key part of 'The Big Deal' experience. Do you think that *(Please tick one answer in each row)*:

- a) you will use the journals (where you will post, and read, messages) frequently (i.e., more than once a week).
- b) you will make sure that you are familiar with all the articles on the site at the start of 'The Big Deal'.
- c) you will make sure that you keep up to date with new articles that will be posted on the site throughout 'The Big Deal'.
- d) it is a good idea for relevant 'Big Deal' information to be available online.

**6. Your expectations of 'The Big Deal' experience:**

Do you think that being involved in 'The Big Deal' will *(Please tick one answer in each row)*:

- a) make you more interested in a business career.
- b) provide you with new skills that will help you in school.
- c) provide you with new skills that will help you in your post-school career.
- d) enable you to get advice that is important to you from your mentor.
- e) possibly change your ideas about your future.

**7. Your future:**

Thinking about your future, *(Please tick one answer in each row)*:

- a) do you intend to stay at school/college after your GCSEs?
- b) do you know what subjects you want to study at AS and A2 level?
- c) do you want to attend university?
- d) do you know what subject/s you would like to study at university?
- e) are you interested in having a business career?
- f) are you interested in a non-business career (for example in education, health, or the voluntary sector)?

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**'The Big Deal'**  
**Competition Day student questionnaire, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2007.**

This questionnaire is part of the independent evaluation of 'The Big Deal' that is being carried out by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), the University of Warwick. Completion of the questionnaire is voluntary, but it will greatly help the evaluation process if you do complete it. The questionnaires are anonymous and confidential.

**1. About Yourself:**

- a) Age:.....
- b) Year Group at School:.....
- c) Gender: male/female (*delete as applicable*)
- d) How do you describe your ethnicity: .....
- e) Do you qualify for free school meals: Yes No (*delete as applicable*)
- f) Did your parent/s or guardian/s go to university or polytechnic: Yes No (*delete as applicable*)
- g) I have been a member of NAGTY since.....

[Questions 2-6 had a five option answer framework : 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', 'Don't know'.]

**2. Working in a 'Big Deal' team:**

Thinking about the last ten weeks, and working with other students in your 'Big Deal' team, do you think that (*Please tick one answer in each row*):

- a) you had an enjoyable time.
- b) you put plenty of effort into the programme.
- c) you learnt new team working skills.
- d) you learnt new organisational skills.
- e) you learnt new planning skills.
- f) you learnt new communications skills.
- g) you learnt new financial and budgeting skills.
- h) you learnt new presentation skills.

**3. Working with a business mentor:**

Throughout your involvement with 'The Big Deal' you had e-contact with a professional business mentor. Thinking about that mentoring, do you think that (*Please tick one answer in each row*):

- a) having an online mentor was a good idea.
- b) your mentor was friendly and easy to talk to online.
- c) you team exchanged messages with your mentor frequently (i.e., more than once a week).
- d) your mentor gave your team a great deal of advice about your 'Big Deal' project.
- e) your mentor gave you personal advice about school work and school-related issues.
- f) your mentor gave you advice about choosing courses related to your future.
- g) your mentor gave you advice about choosing universities and university courses.
- h) your mentor gave you advice about your future career.
- i) your mentor told you about working in the business sector.

#### **4. 'The Big Deal Blogs'.**

Thinking about the online facility, 'The Big Deal Blogs', would you say that (*Please tick one answer in each row*):

- a) your team used the journals (where messages were posted) frequently (i.e., more than once a week).
- b) you and your team became familiar with all the articles on the site at the start of 'The Big Deal'.
- c) you and your team kept up to date with new articles that were be posted on the site throughout 'The Big Deal'.
- d) it is was a good idea for relevant 'Big Deal' information to be available online.

#### **5. 'The Big Deal' experience:**

Do you think that being involved in 'The Big Deal' (*Please tick one answer in each row*):

- a) made you more interested in a business career.
- b) provided you with new skills that will help you in school.
- c) provided you with new skills that will help you in your post-school career.
- d) enabled you to get advice that is important to you from your mentor.
- e) changed your ideas about your future.

#### **6. Big Deal and your future:**

Thinking about your future, would you say that being involved in The Big Deal has: (*Please tick one answer in each row*):

- a) increased your desire to stay at school/college after your GCSEs?
- b) affected your views about what subjects you want to study at AS and A2 level?

- c) increased your desire to attend university?
- d) affected your views about what subject/s you would like to study at university?

**7. Your final thoughts about The Big Deal:**

Please use the space below to say what you most enjoyed about being part of The Big Deal, any problems that you found with the programme, and what your overall view was of the last ten weeks in the competition.

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## **NAGTY BIG DEAL 2007**

### **Students' interview schedule**

**Preamble:** explain to the students what the purpose of the interview is, what CEDAR is, and the final product of the research, along with its future use. Tell them that it is important that their story is heard. The interview is confidential; no names of individuals will be used in the report.

#### ***Introductory***

Establish who makes up the team, their ages, year groups, male/female. Get them to briefly outline the nature of their business/s, and how far they have got in the project.

#### ***Getting involved in the Big Deal.***

**1. Please tell me about how you found out about the programme, and what attracted you to take part in it?**

Prompts:

- Do you know if there were other NAGTY GOAL members in the school who could have taken part, but didn't? Do you know why they chose not to?

#### ***Deciding what to do***

**2. Could you tell me how you went about organising yourself as a business team?**

Prompts:

- How did you develop your business ideas? Was this a long process? How did you agree in the end?
- Were there any particular problems that you faced at the start of the project?
- Were there any other people involved in your team at the start, but who later dropped out? Do you know why they dropped out?

#### ***Advice and help***

**3. At the beginning of the project you went to the Launch Day at Warwick University. What did you think about that day?**

**4. Could you tell me about how you worked with the teacher in charge of your team?**

**5. Could you tell me about how you have worked with your mentor, and how you used the Big Deal blog??**

**Prompts:**

- How often did you contact him/her online?
- Did he/she visit you at the school?
- What did you think of the advice and help?

***Running the business***

**8. Could you tell me about a typical week running your business?**

**Prompts:**

- What did you do?
- How did you divide up the tasks?
- What problems did you face in the day-to-day running of the business?

**9. What sort of skills do you think that you picked up, or improved, as the project went on?**

**10. Tell me about working together as a team over such a long time.**

**Prompts:**

- How were differing roles decided?
- Arguments?
- Commitment?
- Friendships?

**11. Having been involved in the project, what differences has it made concerning what you might want to do in the future, either at school, or beyond?**

School and your business

**12. Please tell me about how your business work fitted in with your school work, and your home and social lives?**

**Prompts:**

- What did your friends and other school people think about your business project?
- What did teachers think about your business project?
- What did your parents/guardians think about it?

**13. How has your school reacted to the fact that a team from this school took part in the competition?**

*Overall*

**14. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the business project, anything that you think that has not been covered?**

Thank you for being interviewed.

## **NAGTY BIG DEAL 2007**

### **Teachers' interview schedule**

**Preamble:** explain what the purpose of the interview is, what CEDAR is, and the final product of the research, along with its future use. Note also, that the interview is confidential, and that no names will be used in the report.

#### ***Getting involved in the Big Deal***

**1. Could you please tell me how you found out about the Big Deal Programme, and how you became involved with running the team at school?**

Prompts:

- What role do you have, if any, in connection with gifted and talented students at the school, and, in particular, with NAGTY?
- Could you tell me about the processes whereby the children become involved in the programme?
- How many children were interested at the outset?
- Was it easy to get children involved?
- How supportive was the school with regard to your involvement with your Big Deal team?

#### ***Running the Big Deal***

**2. Could you tell me how you have found the experience of fitting your Big Deal responsibilities in with your normal teaching and other duties?**

Prompts:



- Are there any ways that your involvement in the Big Deal could have been facilitated more effectively by the school?
- Were there any particular difficulties that made running the team problematic for you?
- Were there any time issues for you?

### ***Advice and help***

#### **3. Could you tell me about the Big Deal Launch Day at Warwick University?**

Prompts:

- Was it useful for you?
- Did the pupils find it useful?
- Could it have been improved in any way?

#### **4. How have the team members used the Big Deal blog site?**

Prompts: has it been easy to use? Have they used it frequently? How did the team decide to divide up their use of the site? What were the positive and negative features of the blog?

#### **5. Could you tell me about any face-to-face contact with the programme mentor?**

Prompts:

- Was she/he of help?
- How did your team benefit from meeting the mentor?
- Were there any ways in which the face-to-face contact with the mentor could have been improved?

#### **6. Are there any other issues that you want to mention with regard to advice and support?**

### ***Outcomes***

#### **7. Could you tell me about the range of outcomes for a) you, and b) your team?**

Prompts:

- Would you want to be involved in a similar project again?
- Could you tell me how the pupils in the team (and, perhaps, those who dropped out) experienced the project?

- What benefits did they obtain from being involved?
- Did they experience any difficulties in terms of their non-Big Deal lives?
- How did the rest of the school (pupils, teachers, and managers) respond to the team's work?
- Do you know if there are any plans to enter a team into the Big Deal next year?

**Overall**

**8. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the Big Deal, anything that you think that has not been covered?**

Many thanks for all your help.

**NAGTY Big Deal 2007**

**Mentors' (telephone) interview schedule**

**Preamble:** explain what the purpose of the interview is, what CEDAR is, and the final product of the research, along with its future use. Note, also, that the interview is confidential, and that no names will be used in the report.

**Getting involved in the Big Deal.**

**1. Could you please tell me how you found out about the Big Deal programme, and became involved as a mentor?**

Prompts:

- Did you volunteer or were you 'volunteered' to act as a mentor?
- What did you know about NAGTY or the Big Deal before becoming involved?

**2. What sort of induction and support did you receive to fulfil the role of mentor?**

Prompts:

- What support/interest was there from your firm (note which before interview)
- What support was there from NAGTY?

## **The running of the Big Deal/Role of mentors**

### **3. Can you tell me about the contact you had with the young people and the teachers – both via the Big Deal blogsite and face to face.**

Prompts:

- Face to face contact?
- Online contact?
- Contact with other mentors?

### **4. How well do you think that you were made use of by the teams and teachers?**

- How often did they contact you online?
- How often did the teachers contact you?
- What sort of advice did the teachers want?

### **5. What do you feel have been the benefits for the students and the schools involved?**

Prompts:

- Introduction to business?
- Leadership skills?
- Conflict resolution skills?
- Planning, marketing etc
- Spill over impact on other pupils?

### **6. Do you have any suggestions for the future development of the role of mentor within the Big Deal Programme?**

Prompts:

- Enhanced induction?
- More access to students?
- Linked to schools nearby?
- More involved in training days?

## **Personal and professional development**

### **7. What benefits do you feel that *you* have gained from being involved in the programme?**

Prompts:

- Does involvement have any significance as far as your cv is concerned?
- Personal development benefits? Why? Why not?
- Would you consider undertaking the same role again?

Thanks.....

**NAGTY Big Deal 2007**  
**The Brightside Trust interview schedule**  
**(for Tuesday, 10 July, 2007)**

**Preamble:** explain what the purpose of the interview is, what CEDAR is, and the final product of the research. Note that the interview is confidential, and that no names will be used in the report.

***Background, practicalities:***

- Could you tell me about the Brightside Trust, and your role in the trust?  
*Prompts: How is it funded? What other projects is it involved in?*
- Could you give me the background to how the trust became involved in NAGTY's Goal programme, and how the Big Deal element of that programme emerged?
- How was the Big Deal project developed, and what was the trust's input, especially in terms of the online mentoring aspects of the project?

***Aims, purposes:***

- Why did the trust see the Goal, Big Deal project as being something that the trust could be involved in?  
*Prompt: does the project match the trust's focus in terms of children from under-represented backgrounds in higher education?*
- What does the trust hope will be the main outcomes of the Big Deal?
- What does the trust hope to get out of involvement with NAGTY on this project?

***Running the project:***

- Can you tell me about the organisation and the operation of the Big Deal blog?  
*Prompt: Recruitment of mentors? Setting up the system? Problems ? Things that went well?*
- How successful do you feel that the Big Deal has been, from the trust's point of view?
- Does the trust intend to be involved in future presentations of the Big Deal?
- What is your overall assessment of the project?

(Thanks for helping with the evaluation).

**NAGTY Big Deal 2007**

**Consultant's (telephone) interview schedule**

**Tuesday, 3 July, 13:30-**

**Preamble:** explain what the purpose of the interview is, what CEDAR is, and the final product of the research. Note that the interview is confidential, and that no names will be used in the report.

***Background:***

- Could you tell me a little about your background, and about Active Learning?
- How did you get involved with the NAGTY Goal Big Deal project? Had you been involved with NAGTY or gifted and talented school students before?
- What sort of brief were you given by NAGTY in terms of the aims and purposes of the Big Deal project?
- How did you match the course materials to the students that are involved with the Big Deal? Were there any particular issues that you took account of given the students involved?
- Did you have any contact with the Brightside Trust?

Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nagty.ac.uk/student\\_academy/goal/index.aspx](http://www.nagty.ac.uk/student_academy/goal/index.aspx) accessed, 31/05/07.

<sup>2</sup> This Goal residential course was held at the University of Lancaster, 26-28 March, 2007, and was evaluated by CEDAR, see, Cullen, S., and Lindsay, G., *National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY), Goal Short Residential Courses. Goal, University of Lancaster Course, 26-28 March, 2007*, CEDAR, University of Warwick, May, 2007. The second Goal residential course was held at Aston University, 5-7 June, 2007; it was evaluated by CEDAR, University of Warwick; report forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> NAGTY, The Brightside Trust, 'The Big Deal National Enterprise Competition 2007; Outline Teacher Briefing', p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> NAGTY document, 'Underachievement', December, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> The Goldman Sachs Foundation, 'The Brightside Trust, NAGTY Goal Programme, Project Plan: The Big Deal', February, 2007, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Percentage of the Big Deal students drawn from cohort two of Goal provided by NAGTY in a telephone conversation with CEDAR, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Figures taken from NAGTY, 'Goal Baseline Report, Cohort II: Management Summary, External Steering Group', 2007, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> All occupation data and commentary, *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>11</sup> NAGTY, 'Outline of student recruitment for Goal', pp.1-2.

<sup>12</sup> NAGTY, The Brightside Trust, *The Big Deal: Student Guide*, 2007, p.17.

<sup>13</sup> NAGTY, The Brightside Trust, *The Big Deal: Mentor Guide*, 2007, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Figures provided by The Brightside Trust, 22 August, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Final status report of Big Deal Blog compiled by The Brightside Trust, received on 13 July, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Blog postings data compiled by The Brightside Trust, received, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> NAGTY, The Brightside Trust, *The Big Deal: Student Guide*, 2007, Week 10: The 'Pitch', p. 28.