

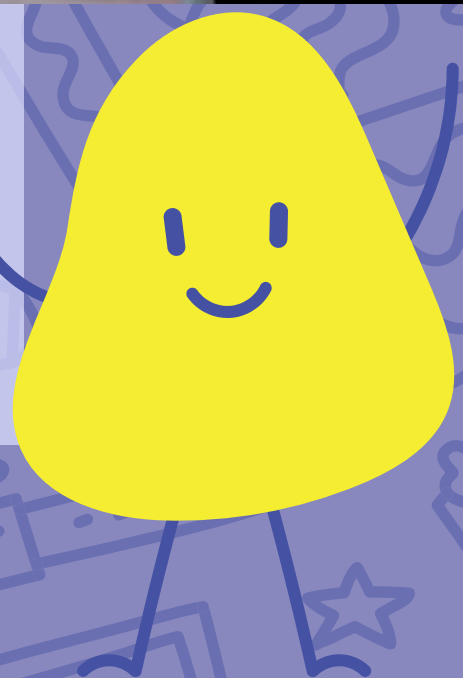


LIGHT UP LEARNING



IMPACT REPORT

2024/25



ABOUT US

*My mentor tells me every time I see her that I am capable and I started to believe her. My mentor **gave me confidence** to apply for construction at college and I got a place and start in August **I could not of done that without her support** plus she's funny as anything.*

Founded in **2015**, Light Up Learning ("LUL") is a registered charity (SC045701) providing a **unique form of one-to-one mentoring** for high school students across Edinburgh, the Lothians and the Borders.

We have been **dedicated to igniting a love of learning in young people** and transforming the nature of education in Scotland **for over 10 years now**.

We aim to **address issues of unequal access to education and disengagement in the classroom by creating low-stress, supportive and playful learning environments** for young people who have experienced disadvantage.

We encourage students to **pursue their own interests and curiosities** and place them in charge of their own learning. We **help them develop the skills and connections** they need to achieve their potential.



42%

of mentees are eligible for Free School Meals



71%

of mentees are living in SIMD 1-3



7%

of mentees are a Looked After Child



7%

of mentees are Young Carers

OUR MENTEEES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the impact of Light Up Learning's mentoring programme during the **2024/25** academic year, based on feedback from mentees and teachers across our 12 partner schools.

KEY FINDINGS

- **96% of teachers said LUL helped improve mentees' self-esteem and confidence.**
- **95% felt that LUL made students more positive about their education and future.**

WHAT MENTEES TOLD US

They now feel **more confident**, more **hopeful**, and better able to **recognise their own strengths**. Many discovered new interests they hadn't explored before, from psychology to film, hairdressing to politics.

Others said mentoring helped them **set personal goals** and take first steps toward college, volunteering, or career plans they'd never considered possible.

They also spoke about how much they **valued having a safe space** to be themselves.

Mentoring was often the one part of the week where they **felt truly listened to**,

supported, and free from judgement.

Students described it as a **calm, creative** break from the structure of school, a space where they could **learn in their own way**, follow what excited them, and feel like **someone was genuinely on their side**.



THE NUMBERS

FROM JULY 2024 - JULY 2025

153

MENTEES

14

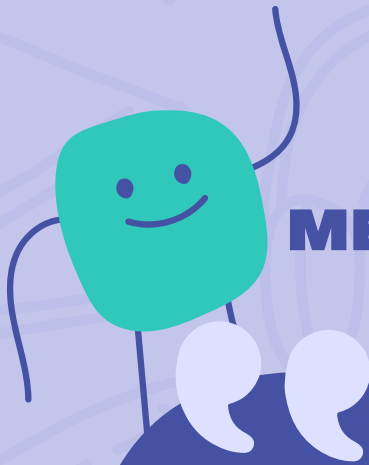
MENTORS

12

SCHOOLS

5,967

MENTORING HOURS
OFFERED



*Doing mentoring has had a massive impact on me feeling better about myself knowing I can get through the day positively and personally, I **don't think I would be the person I am today without my mentor** and all the support and guidance I have been given.*

FROM AUGUST 2025

- Start a Youth Advisory Panel.
- Expand into Liberton High School to bring our school partners to a total of 13.
- Develop our Workshop Programme.
- Commit to diversifying our funding streams to ensure continued support for our young people and allow for further expansion.

AND TO **KEEP
LEARNING!**

LEARNING WORKSHOPS

This year we delivered 6 workshops for 26 Mentees from across our 12 partner schools.

ART TECHNIQUES with **Felicity Inkpen**

The art workshop inspired me to do more painting. I learned a few techniques.

I learnt that it was ok to try new things, learn a new game, and make conversation with someone from another school that I didn't know.

THEATRE & STAGE DESIGN with **Imagine**

OUTDOOR LEARNING with **The Green Team**

I managed to talk to new people, something I hadn't had the confidence to do before.

I learned that we should make easy swaps (ingredients) to keep the planet safe from climate change.

SUSTAINABLE COOKING at the **RBGE**

ENTREPRENEURIAL NAIL TECH with **Millie Fern Nails**

BREAKTHROUGH JOURNEY

Mentee Ava began LUL feeling disengaged, with low self-esteem and a tendency to walk away from teachers when faced with challenges.

When starting LUL Ava talked about **hating school and learning**. However, after a few sessions, Ava opened up about her love of the outdoors. This led to discussions about future careers and **dreams of travel, especially to Japan**. Her mentor built a **learning project around planning a trip through Japan**.

“Thank you for making me enjoy school more!”

Her mentor was thrilled to watch as **this young person who vehemently denied any love of learning embarked on months’ worth of learning and research and delving into the history and culture of each place** they mapped out.

Ava became visibly more relaxed and talkative. **Her growing confidence was noticed by other staff within the school**. She even **gave a class presentation** on Japan and used her new knowledge to inspire an art project. As **her guidance teacher shared: “It’s been so helpful and vital knowing Ava’s passions.”**

Her mentor also reflected on Ava’s transformation, “She now talks openly and enthusiastically about her future and what excites her.”



ENHANCED LEARNING TRIPS

This year we delivered 15 Trips for 24 Mentees.

EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART DEGREE SHOW

It was fun to see what you can do in the field of art, **it inspired me to take my passion on more.** There are many, many different things in the college, from paintings to buildings from scrap to clothes and fashion.



UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH'S PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

It gave me the chance for some burning questions in my head to be finally answered first hand after a long time of wanting to study Psychology.



FIRST MINISTERS QUESTIONS AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

I learned about the work that goes on in the parliament and what MSPs do. **I have achieved meeting an MSP** and meeting the leader of the Scottish Labour Party.



WHAT THE MENTEES HAD TO SAY



How do Mentees feel about school now?

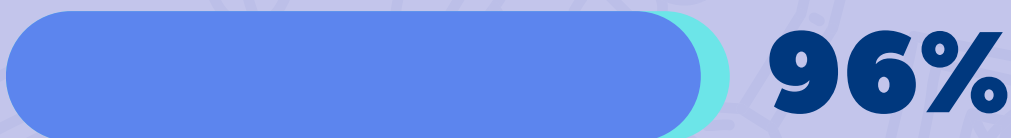
Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of Mentees report feeling more positive about school.

How do Mentees feel about learning new things?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of Mentees report increased learning enjoyment.



My mentor helps by just being there and listening and she gives me good advice. She is on my side and doesn't judge me.

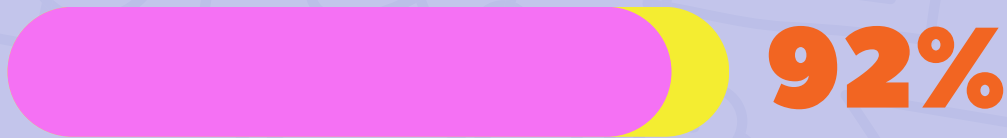
She feels like the first person to really listen to me.



WHAT THE MENTEES HAD TO SAY

What do Mentees think about their future now?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:

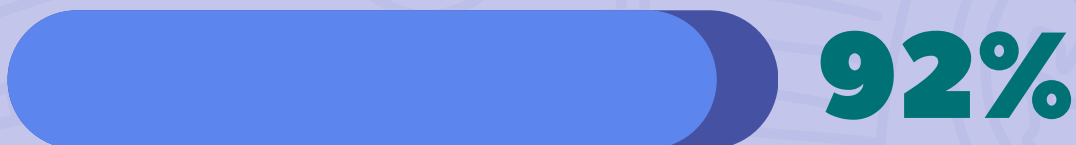


of Mentees now have goals and plans for their futures.

*My mentor helped me find things I am passionate about that I would have never seen myself taking a liking to, and I am really grateful for that because **when I first started going to these sessions was such a different person compared to who I am now and I am such a better person now.***

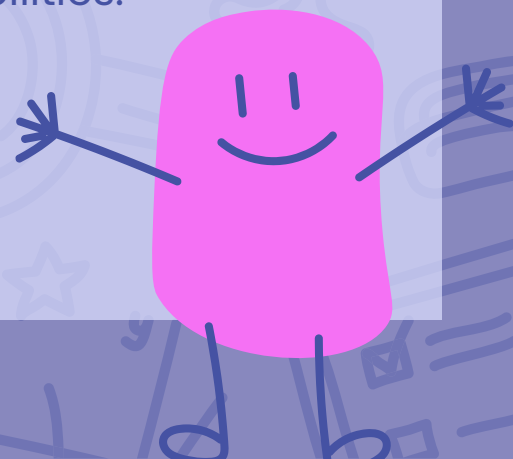
How confident do Mentees feel about themselves and their abilities?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of Mentees now feel pretty confident or really confident about themselves and their abilities.

*She brought medical stuff for me to practise with and that **boosted my interest in medicine as a career.***



WHAT THE MENTEES HAD TO SAY

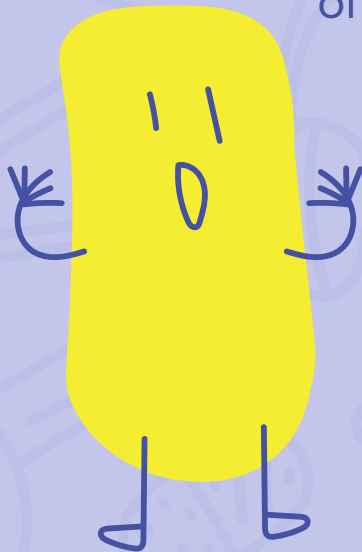


Are Mentees more likley to attend school on mentoring days?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



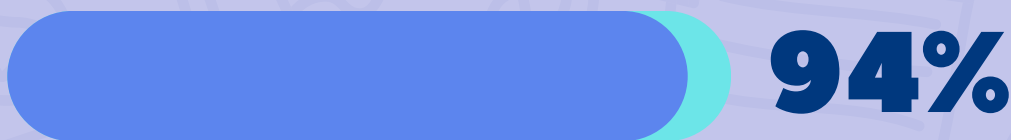
of Mentees said yes!



*My mentor has made me feel more confident about the future and **I know my subject options and the career path of childcare.***

Are Mentees more likely to participate in class?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of Mentees participate more in class at least sometimes.



WHAT THE TEACHERS HAD TO SAY

To what extent do you think LUL has helped improve their confidence and self-esteem?

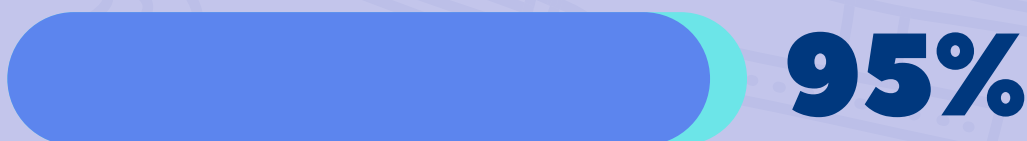
Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of teachers felt LUL helped students better understand their strengths and abilities.

To what extent do you think LUL has helped improve their feelings about education and future aspirations?

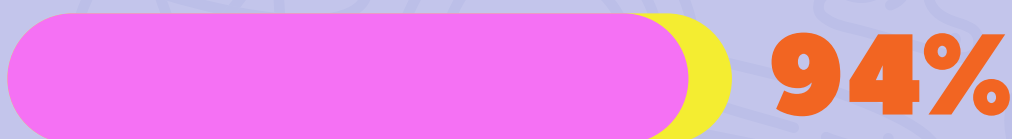
Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of teachers felt LUL helped students feel more positive about their education and future.

To what extent do you think LUL has helped improve their school engagement?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:

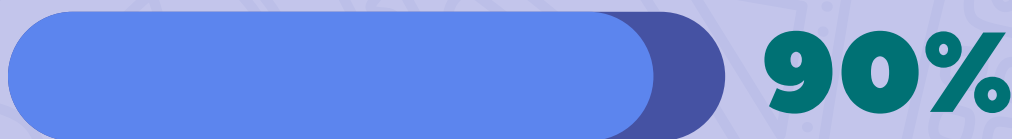


of teachers felt that LUL had a positive effect on their students' engagement in school.

WHAT THE TEACHERS HAD TO SAY

To what extent do you think LUL has helped improve their knowledge about post-secondary options?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of teachers felt LUL helped students understand their options after school.

To what extent do you think LUL has helped improve their attendance?

Since starting mentoring sessions at Light Up Learning:



of teachers felt LUL contributed positively.

This **boost in self-belief** has helped students feel happier, more settled, and **more willing to take part in school life**. Even small steps forward in confidence like speaking up in class represent huge personal achievements for these young people.



FROM SPARK TO SUCCESS: LUL GRADUATE REFLECTIONS

This year we interviewed **4 LUL graduates** to **explore the lasting impact of mentoring** as they moved into college, university, and work. Their stories highlight the challenges many young people face and the transformative support mentoring can offer.



Bailey described experiencing daily panic attacks, **feeling disconnected from school** and not knowing what they were interested in. Bailey **found a new love for psychology** through research sessions and **learned study techniques** that worked for them, even before a dyslexia diagnosis. She said, **“learning, it can actually be fun to learn”**, which **changed their entire approach to education** and led them to study Psychology at university.

Cameron shared that **learning had felt daunting** and originally planned to go straight into work. Cameron described **sessions as a calm space and helped him realise learning could be enjoyable** rather than daunting. **This shift encouraged them to attend college** and even start volunteering with a youth group, something they couldn't have imagined before.

Sarah spoke openly about severe **social anxiety**, saying **she only came to school to see her mentor** and felt more excitement for mentoring sessions than for any other part of school.

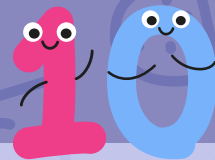
Sarah explained that mentoring sessions with her mentor **helped her overcome her anxiety** and **build the confidence to pursue her dream** of hairdressing. She shared, **“working with my mentor changed me as a person... it's helped me realise that I can do stuff that I've always wanted to do even though sometimes my anxiety is like 'you can't do that'.**

Mark described school as chaotic and stressful, often **feeling demotivated and overwhelmed** by pressure and a rigid academic focus. Mark highlighted how sessions with his mentor **gave him a sense of ownership over learning**. Focusing on creative interests like film, **helped him feel motivated to come to school and encouraged him to dive deeper into his passions**. He described his mentoring sessions as **“more like a conversation”** than a classroom, taking away pressure and sparking genuine curiosity.

Together, these stories show how mentoring can unlock potential, build confidence, and help young people take their next steps on their own terms.



10 YEARS OF LIGHT UP LEARNING



TEN YEARS AGO, LIGHT UP LEARNING WAS A BOLD IDEA WITH A BIG AMBITION

Today, it is a thriving, values-driven organisation. This anniversary was not just a chance to look back; it was a moment to look forward, renewed in our determination to enable young people to change their lives through their learning. We know we need to build our network of supporters, so that we can grow our impact, and to support any young person who needs us. 2025–2026 will see us investing in our people, in order to be able to achieve this – watch this space, as we embark on the next decade!

As Chair of the Board, I could not have felt prouder – or more inspired – at **Light Up Learning's 10th anniversary celebration**. In every conversation, every moment, **there was a powerful truth: this is what meaningful education really looks like ...** and it all comes down to **enabling young people to learn to love learning, through learning about what they love**.



Dr Helen Wright – Chair of Trustees

The **launch of our brand-new film** was a great highlight of the event; it is engaging and full of heart, and it is a **'must-watch' for anyone connected with, or interested in, our work**. The film captures the essence of our work with striking clarity; seeing our students and mentors on screen, speaking so openly and passionately, reminded us all why we do what we do. **The film is more than a showcase – it is a call to action, a celebration of curiosity, and a reminder of the potential we unlock when we place trust in young people**. Equally unforgettable were the contributions from two LUL alumni. Their words were honest, moving and full of hope.

SCAN ME



Listening to them reflect on how Light Up Learning shaped their outlooks, their confidence, and their futures was deeply emotional. They spoke not just of what they had learned, but of who they had become ... and how that journey had begun with a mentor who listened and believed in them. It was, for many of us, the most powerful moment of the evening.

The sense of community, and of commitment, was palpable. We left the event re-energised and ready for the next chapter, grateful for everyone who has travelled this journey with us so far.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DONORS

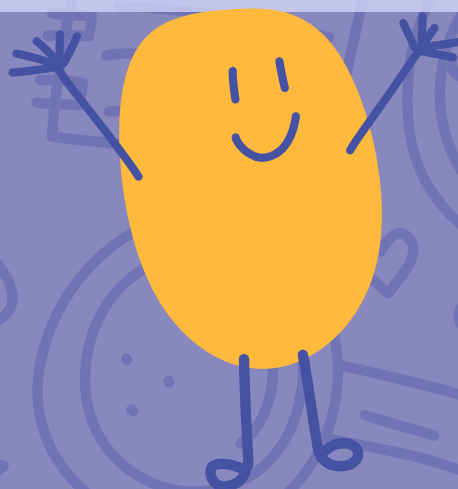
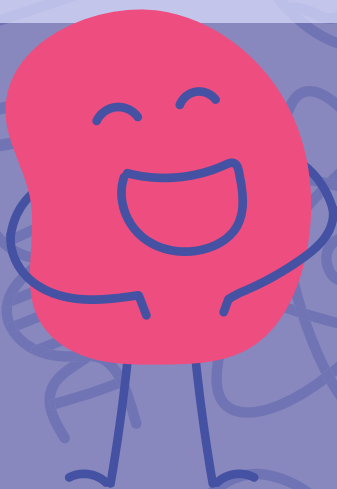
HDH Willis, AABIE, The Maple Trust, West Lothian Educational Trust, Tillyloss Trust, Volant Trust, The Stafford Trust, Basil Death Trust, Dr Guthrie's Association, Nineveh Trust, Leith Benevolent Association, Scottish Children's Lottery Trust, Matthew Wrightson Charity Trust, The KPE4 Trust, The Ponton Trust, The Mary Brown Memorial, ECHT, The Cordis Charitable Trust, Charles and Ann Fraser Charitable Trust, Binks Trust, James Wood Trust, Ballie Gifford, The JTH Charitable Trust, The Sydney Black Charitable Trust, The Mbili Charitable Trust, David Family Foundation, Walker Shoolbraid Charitable Trust, The Bayne's Charitable Trust, Robin Leith Trust, The Ronald Miller Foundation, CPF Trust, The JTH Charitable Trust, Thales Charitable Trust, ABC Foundation, The Pat Newman Memorial Trust, Robin Leith Trust, The Serendipity Foundation, Dickson Minto LLP, The Rotary Club of Edinburgh Jubilee Charity Fund, Mercers Company, Ward Family Charitable Trust, The Pettigrew Charitable Trust, The Paristamen Charity, Abbey Church, The Helen A Reid Charitable Trust, The Leigh Trust, Himat Tanna Charitable Trust, Foundation Scotland, Squire Patton Boggs Charitable Trust, Mrs Jeanette Crighton's Charitable Trust, The Courant Fund for Children, The Cordis Charitable Trust, Donald Mackintosh, Grahame and Rosaly McLauchlan, James Ferguson, Will Ferguson, Alastair Andrew, Stephanie Geddes, Stephen Connolly

If you'd like to support our work, please get in touch with us at info@lightuplearning.org.uk

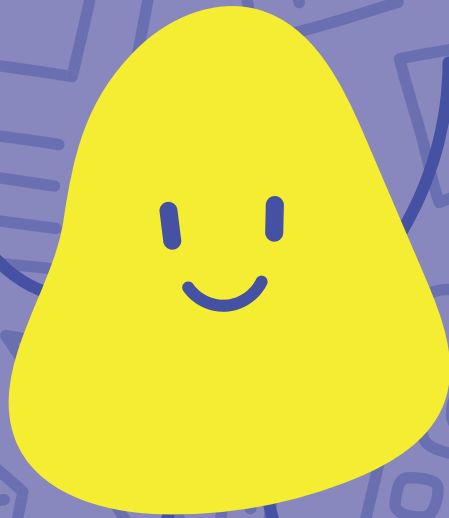
We also want to thank all our Mentees, Mentors, Teachers, and other school staff who support our students, as well as our Board of Trustees.

If you'd like to know more about Light Up Learning, check out our Mentees' work on Instagram (@LearnAndLightUp) or visit our website (www.lightuplearning.org).

*You can see a full set of our latest accounts, on our OSCR page here:
<https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=SC045701>*



WE HOPE THIS REPORT DEMONSTRATES THE LASTING IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT!



LIGHT UP LEARNING



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