

CREATIVE  
MENTOR  
NETWORK

2023  
Impact  
Report

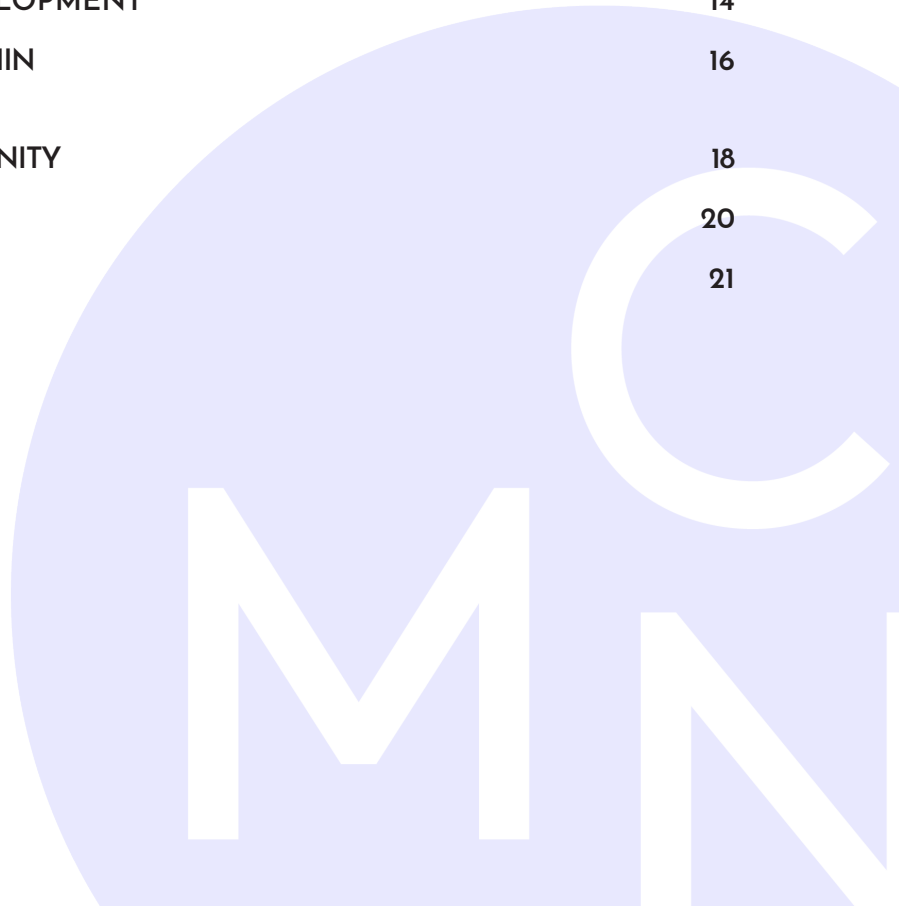




Image by Dave George

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# REFLECTING ON 2023

For some, January is the most dreaded month of the year, but I relish having the time to review our data, run focus groups and look back on the achievements of the last year. Seeing the work we've done, and the young people we've helped gives me the boost to start the year with the positivity that's needed to get through the gloomy days of January.

It's unsurprising to say the current environment doesn't feel optimistic. Unemployment rates are forecast to rise in 2024, financial inequalities are increasing, and food bank users are at an all-time high, nearly tripling since 2014. The cost of living crisis had far-reaching implications, in particular for the young people we support on our programmes. This has made entering the creative industry for many much harder, and for some, unfortunately, impossible.

Charities across the country have also faced hardship during this time, and it has been a challenging year for us too. As businesses have restricted their DE&I budgets, we've had to work even harder to engage with new partners to continue delivering our mentoring programmes. A huge thanks goes out to our 2023 partners for continuing to support us and be advocates for change.

However, these challenges have not gone unnoticed, and have sparked more conversations about the economic divide and disparity that exist within our society. Conversations about class and privilege are on the rise, businesses are starting to report socioeconomic data, and politicians are openly supporting socioeconomic diversity. Change is coming.

Despite the challenges from last year, we are immensely proud of the work we've achieved in this time. In 2023 we launched 15 mentoring programmes and matched 328 mentoring pairs. We have been consistently blown away by the talent, optimism and energy of our mentors and mentees across all these programmes.

We took time to tap into one of our core mentoring principles in 2023 and ensured we were actively listening to our community. Taking on feedback from our previous impact report, focus groups, and youth board, we ensured that our actions last year reflected what we knew our community had asked for. One key area of focus was supporting mentees with understanding career earnings, how to freelance, and general financial literacy. We created a range of resources, delivered a freelancing event and were even

able to set mentees up with free accountant meetings thanks to one of our amazing mentors.

For our mentors and partners, it was a year of listening to mentor feedback and refining and updating our training so that they have the necessary tools and knowledge to feel supported along their mentoring journey, as well as continue to advocate for socioeconomic diversity within their organisations.

As we begin 2024, we know some of the same obstacles await us. But we will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of Creative Mentor Network, which gives us even more drive to continue to champion socioeconomic diversity, deliver mentoring programmes and fight for a fairer creative industry. Creativity thrives on change, new voices, and challenges, so we look forward to being part of this change in the next year.

Natasha Khan.

Natasha Khan.  
*Acting Managing Director*

Image by Beatriz Oliveira





**371**  
CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS  
**TRAINED**

**1574**  
**PROFESSIONAL**  
**CONNECTIONS MADE**

**2308**  
**MENTORING**  
**SESSIONS**



CREATIVE  
MENTOR  
NETWORK

**2023 IN REVIEW**

**94%** of mentors  
would  
recommend  
the programme

**97%** feel confident advocating  
for socioeconomic  
diversity within their  
workplace

**84%**  
developed  
their listening  
skills

**122**

**MENTEES GAINED WORK  
OR WORK EXPERIENCE**

**322**

**YOUNG PEOPLE  
SUPPORTED BY  
A MENTOR**



**67** CREATIVE  
PARTNERS

**97%** of mentors  
understand the  
barriers to entry



“ I was given lots of specific training and techniques to improve my mentoring skills, so rather than just a pairing with a mentee I was aided in personal growth. I was also impressed with how well they paired mentees with mentors. ”

**Ben Skidmore, TV Champions, Everyone TV**



“ My mentor was incredible. I was partnered with someone who believes in my vision and is helping me make it come to life. It's given me a different kind of confidence in myself and my abilities and capabilities. ”

**Nikki Adebisi, Soho Mentorship**

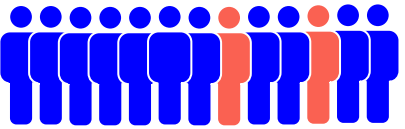


“ We consistently get feedback that participants get a lot out of their involvement with Bright Sparks, and tangible skills in inclusive mentoring and coaching that they can apply to their own roles. This programme is a core part of our DEI training, and this year we're excited to further amplify by joining forces with our friends in Prime Video, to give even more young people the opportunity to understand our business and make vital connections to help them into the industry. ”

**Jennifer Finch, Bright Sparks, Amazon EU XCM**



**Just 16%** of people in creative jobs are from working class backgrounds.



Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

# ABOUT US

## WHO WE ARE

We are Creative Mentor Network, a UK charity working towards a future where there is no class ceiling in the UK creative industries.

## WHAT WE DO

We run mentoring programmes that support young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to help them **GET IN** and **GET ON** in the creative world of work.

We train industry professionals as mentors and advocates for socioeconomic diversity, so they can help our community and be inclusive leaders in their workplace and industry for the work that we do.

## WHY WE DO IT

You're twice as likely to get into the creative industries if you are from a privileged background than from a lower socioeconomic background.

The imbalance of those who make it into the creative industries means there's a lack of creative diversity in the UK which impacts what we watch, read, see and listen to.

## OUR GOALS

### For Young People:

- More young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are able to enter the creative industries
- Reduce the class pay gap
- Be advocates for the creative industries amongst their peers to change perceptions within lower socioeconomic communities

### For the Creative Industry:

- Improve recruitment processes to reduce biases and barriers to improve accessibility to candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- Be advocates for socioeconomic diversity and recognise it as a serious DE&I issue
- Invest in talent so those from lower socioeconomic barriers can progress and become leaders in the industry



Mary Kate & Alison, Soho Mentorship Brighton.

Image by Luke Pembroke

# MAKING CAREER PATHS ACCESSIBLE

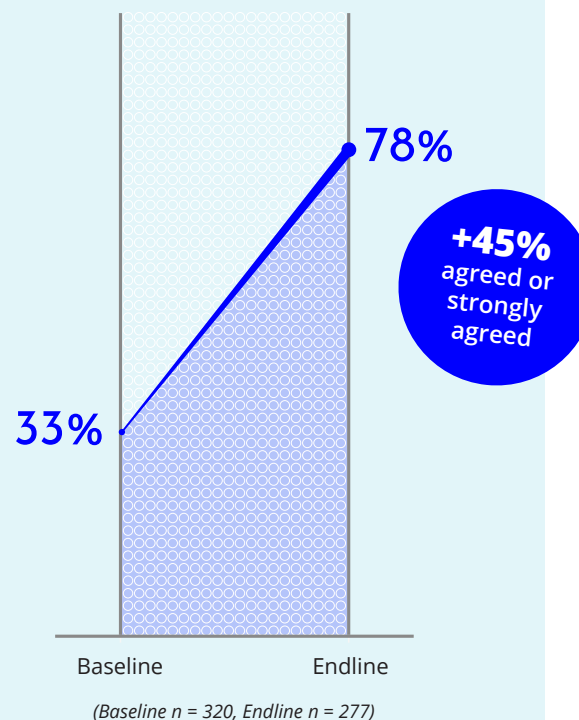
A huge part of the work that we do focuses on improving accessibility to the creative industry. The starting point of that is making job roles and career paths visible. How do you look for a job or know which is suited to your skills and interests if you do not know it exists? Having a mentor proved invaluable in broadening their mentee's knowledge of what job roles exist and the varying career paths to take.

**“**In terms of knowledge of the creative industries, there were eight different areas that I worked on with my mentor. I didn't know two of them existed, and I am applying for jobs in one of these now. Without my mentor, I wouldn't have been able to find these opportunities and know they were right for me! **”**

**David Simkins, Positive Influence**

## MENTORING GIVES MENTEES A STRONGER UNDERSTANDING OF CAREER ROLES AND PATHS INTO THE INDUSTRY

Mentees were asked to what extent they agree with “I have a clear understanding of the different roles and career paths within the creative industries e.g. I know about roles such as ‘creative’, ‘strategist’ and ‘producer’ ”.



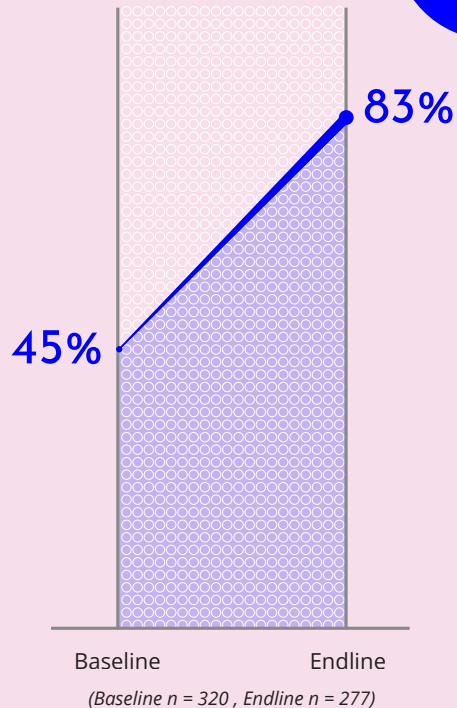




## OUR MENTEES ARE MORE CONFIDENT FINDING EMPLOYERS AND JOBS THAT ARE RIGHT FOR THEM

Mentees were asked to what extent they agree with "I can identify employers and organisations relevant to my career interests".

**+38%**  
agreed or strongly agreed



Mentors further supported their mentees in understanding the career landscape by opening their networks. Long-term, this has made mentees feel more confident in navigating their future careers as well as knowing where to look to find suitable employers and opportunities.

*"I wasn't sure about what specific position I wanted to work in, so my mentor introduced me to a developer, business owner and UX designer so I could understand what they do and how they got their roles. My mentor also gave me a map to describe the different design roles so that I could pick the best for me to work in."*

**Yanan Guo, Break the Wall**



Image by Beatriz Oliveira

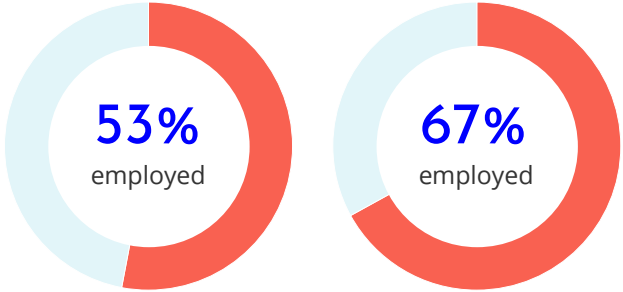
# EMPOWERING OUR MENTEES

Empowering the young people we work with to be able to take ownership of their career ambitions and futures is fundamental to what we do. Working with a mentor had a significant impact on mentees' ability to communicate their professional needs. By recognising what it is they want from a job, what their career aspirations are and knowing what skills and experience they need to develop to attain these are essential to getting into the industry. **This resulted in 60 mentees gaining employment last year.**

## MENTEE EMPLOYMENT INCREASED OVER THEIR PROGRAMMES.

Percentage in employment at different time points

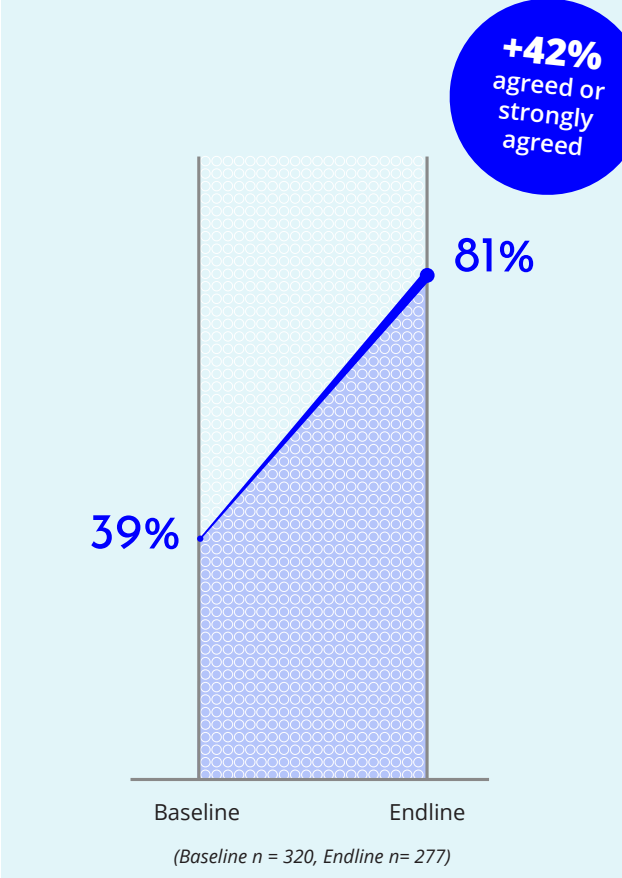
At start of programme      At end of programme



(n = 315 and 264 respectively)

## MENTEES FEEL MORE CONFIDENT COMMUNICATING THEIR PROFESSIONAL NEEDS

Mentees were asked to what extent they agree with "I am able to clearly communicate what my professional needs are".



Linked to the ability to self-advocate is confidence. Being confident in oneself and abilities leads to greater self-advocacy. Confidence was mentioned over 40 times in mentee focus groups and was stated by many to be the biggest takeaway of the programme. Mentors built their mentee's confidence by providing reassurance, support, clarity, validating ideas and supporting them to develop skills and recognise the ones they already have.

**60**  
MENTEES  
GAINING  
EMPLOYMENT  
IN 2023

**“**What I really enjoyed about the programme was that my mentor didn't know me at all. She would just ask me questions on what I've done and what things I want to do. She was just my personal cheerleader and instilled me with a lot of confidence in the things I've done, the things I want to do, and helped me see what I'm capable of doing.**”**

**Toni-Ann Murphy, Soho Mentorship**

**“**I think most of all, having a mentor improved confidence in myself. They helped me see how the skills I already had could help me pull something off even without specific experience in that field and made me more confident in my abilities.

It was so reassuring and helpful.**”**

**Joanna Afroozi, Break the Wall**

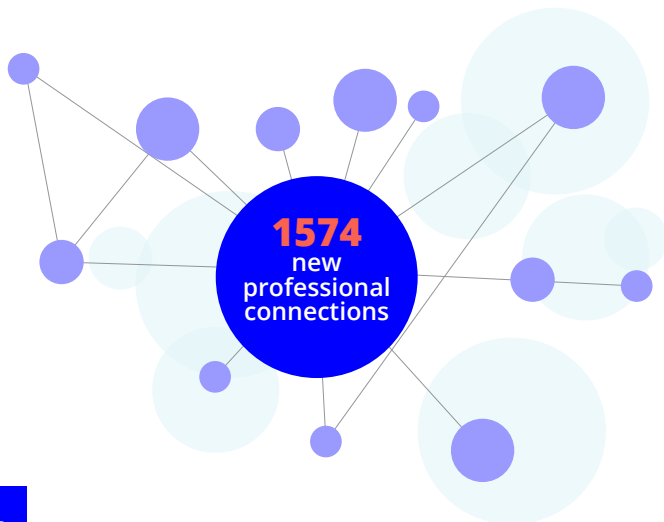


# SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF “WHO YOU KNOW”

Networking is fundamental to the creative industry, not only in accessing job opportunities but also in gaining exposure to new roles and fostering creative relationships for collaboration and development.

We are blown away by the networking that was facilitated over 2023; mentees made a total of 1574 new professional connections. That's an average of 6 new connections per mentee!

Mentors didn't only share their networks and make introductions, they also supported mentees in the skill of networking; how to do it, how to make the most of a conversation, and how to follow up. Through their training, they understood the importance of social capital and made this a key area of support for our mentees which led to amazing outcomes; employment, collaborations and new projects.



“I would talk to my mentor beforehand about how best to approach people, talk about my work and make the most out of the opportunity. We would plan and prepare, thinking about who was going and how to make the most out of it. We developed a template which I still use and apply to other situations today. My professional network developed a lot, partly from my mentor, who set me up to shadow a shoot and an edit house. I spoke to a colourist when I was there, who invited me back for future projects. At the programme showcase, I presented my film and spoke to another mentee, who is a producer; we are now going to work together on my next film. After the event, I connected with another mentor too, who gave me some great advice and introduced me to his production company.”

**Julia Zlotnik, APA Mentoring**

## MENTEES INCREASED THEIR NETWORKING SKILLS, HELPING THEM MAKE NEW INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

Mentees were asked to what extent they agree with “I am able to build positive relationships and make industry connections”.

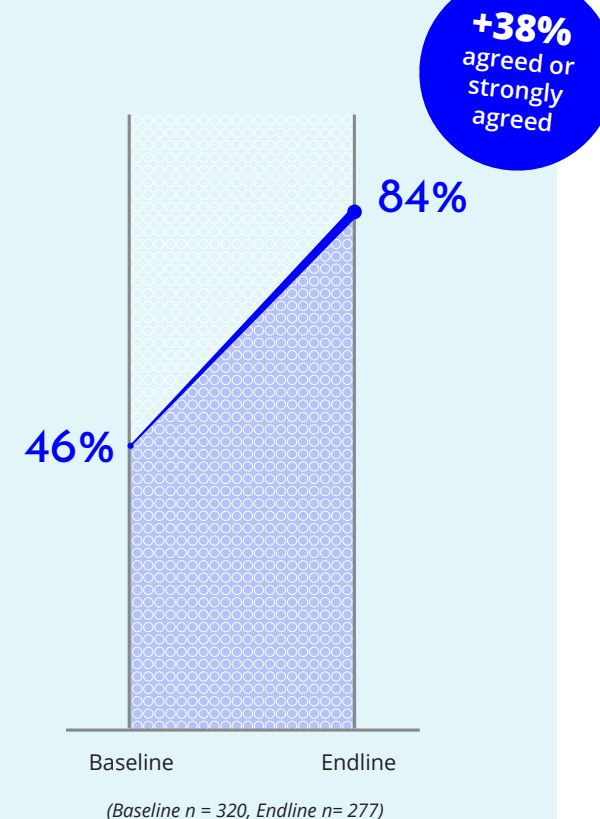




Image by Matthew Kaltenborn, Barbican, 2023

# HOW MENTORING SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Our mentors are fundamental to our programmes, and whilst they support the development and growth of our mentees, they also develop core skills themselves. The training we provide our mentors ensures that they are able to support their mentees over the course of

**Over 80% of mentors agreed that the training was effective in supporting them in their journey.**

the programme. Over 80% of mentors agreed that the training was effective in supporting them in their journey. But this goes further than the mentee-mentor relationship.

Feedback from mentors

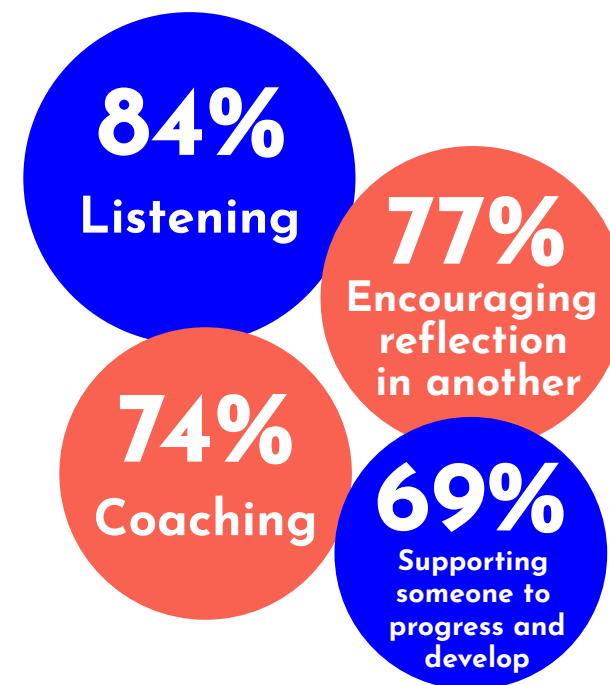
shows that the skills have helped them be more effective managers, helping them coach and support those within their teams. Many mentors have also taken on additional mentoring relationships outside of the programme with other young people in our community.

**“**I found the process incredibly helpful to be able to start those development conversations. I switched away from acting like a teacher and having one way conversations, and used the coaching and listening skills that I found were much more effective with my mentee, and then in my job.**”**

**Ellen Nicholson, Sanofi,  
Soho Mentorship**

## MENTORS ACQUIRED TRANSFERABLE SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING AND MENTORING

Percentage who said they improved in each skill area. Sums to more than 100% as people can pick multiple skills.



(n = 287)



Image by Rosie Morrisson

What also came to light in our focus groups is that mentoring made mentors feel more confident in themselves, their skills and their knowledge. The training gave them the tools they needed, and working with their mentee gave them a practical space to use these tools and practice these skills. Following the programme, mentors said they were able to think differently about what they can bring to certain conversations, made them think outside of the box to problem solve which led to many reigniting skills and leveraging their networks.



THE RISE OF THE

## ACCIDENTAL MANAGER

**82%** of managers who enter management positions have not had any formal management and leadership training.

*(Source CMI 2023)*

“When I first partnered up with my mentee, he was very keen to get into camera work, editing and post production. That’s not something that I have direct experience in so I was slightly nervous as to what I could offer him. But then you realise through all the training that we take for granted all of the skills that we have, the time that we have spent in the industry and our social capital. I found it incredibly insightful and felt very well guided through all of the training that we did.”

**Eva Kelly, Acorn TV,  
Break the Wall Soho Mentorship**



# CHANGING THE INDUSTRY FROM WITHIN

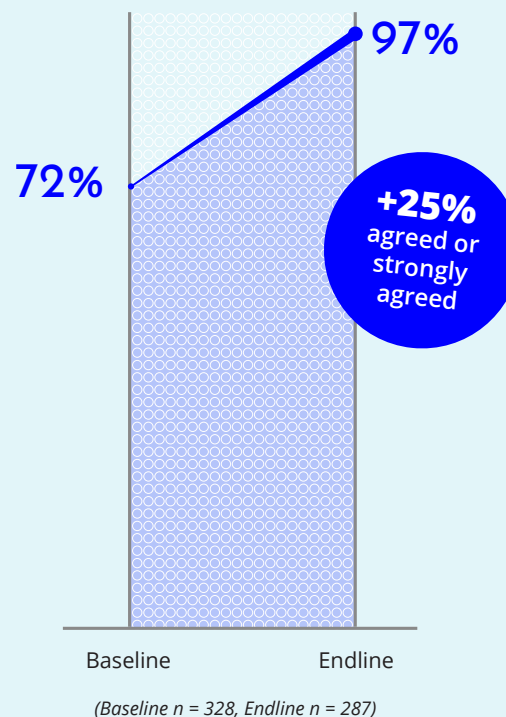
The help us break the class ceiling in the UK creative industries beyond mentoring, our training supports those creative individuals within the industry to continue to advocate and support socioeconomic diversity. This will help us change the industry from within. Through our programmes, mentors gain a greater understanding of the barriers to entry for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and how to support them get in, and get on in the industry.

## LONG TERM POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- Diversifying of recruitment networks
- Changing in hiring processes e.g. removal of CVs
- Paid apprenticeship and work experience programmes

## MENTORS INCREASED THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BARRIERS TO ACCESSING THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

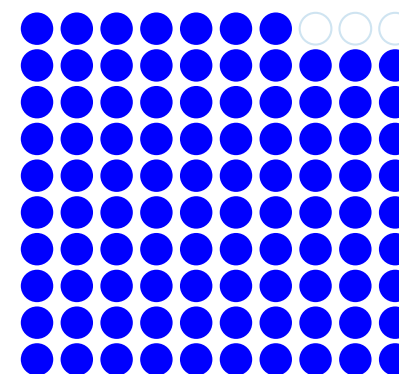
Mentors were asked to what extent they agree with "I have a good understanding of the barriers to access for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds".



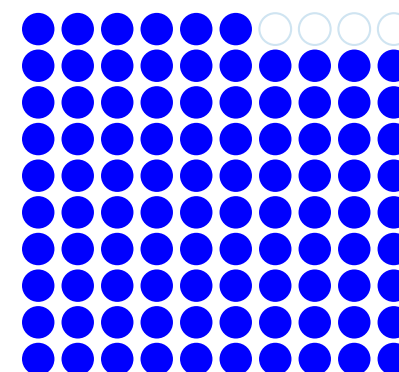
## OUR MENTORS GO ON TO BE DE&I ADVOCATES AT WORK

Mentors were asked about their thoughts towards diversity in their own organisations (n = 286)

**97%** mentors feel motivated to contribute to company diversity and inclusion strategy

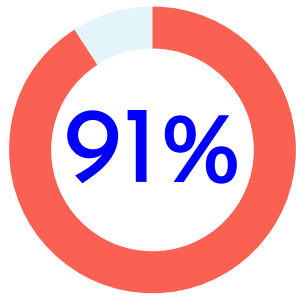


**96%** mentors feel confident advocating for socioeconomic diversity





Data shows our mentors feel motivated and confident to advocate for socioeconomic diversity following the programme. It is brilliant to see tangible outcomes of this and ways in our mentoring programmes also support wider DE&I aims within our partner organisations.



**of our mentors said they were able to support young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds**

*“At my agency there have been a few people that have done the programme and it’s the thing we have learned from the course that we are taking into account with our hiring processes. We have an internship programme and typically we always partnered with one university but now we’re opening it up so that we’re pulling in people from more diverse backgrounds. We also updated our interview and hiring process; what I found really valuable was the section of the training on avoiding bias when you’re hiring, removing things like “vibe checks” because it encourages you to hire people that are just the same as everyone that’s already there.”*

**Lauren Kennedy, Break the Wall, Influence Digital Ltd**



# STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY: COLLABORATIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY

Mentoring is a fantastic tool that helps our mentees gain knowledge, insight and connections from those with more experience than they have. However, these aren't the only relationships that our community benefits from whilst on our programmes.

Over the last 10 years, we've accrued a huge network of ambitious, young creatives and given them a community to connect with one another. In the last year, mentees have collaborated with one another on podcasts, short films, radio shows, interviews and putting on events.

The community built for our mentees is filled with positive interactions where mentees seek help, ask questions, share opportunities and connect networks. Providing a space away from the industry, and hierarchy, gives mentees a space where the mentees have created a sharing space where knowledge, experience and connections are more accessible.

Our mentors are trained to support their mentees with this, but hearing from our community, and

being put in an encouraging space with other people with shared backgrounds can give them the confidence to network, reach out to others, and work together. They're able to see what past mentees have gone on to achieve and learn what current mentees are doing, in turn giving them a more positive outlook on what they can do.

Networking isn't just about exchanging business cards and calling for a favour when you need help. It's also about building meaningful relationships with people on the same career journey as you and overcoming challenges similar to yours.

Informal hiring networks dominate the creative industry, and providing our mentees with their own version of this helps to break down barriers to make creative opportunities more accessible. The collaboration that comes as a result of this gives rise to a diversity of projects, but most importantly, they give our mentees the confidence they need to continue pursuing their goals.

*“ Now I have a bunch of people around me who are also trying to do the same things I'm doing. We share the resources and opportunities amongst each other as well. ”*

**Toni-Ann Murphy**

*“ It's been so helpful, especially when I meet other mentees. Even just getting to hear what other people were doing because I was very much at a point where I was still figuring out what I wanted to do. I think speaking to the other mentees made me realise my skill set does live in other careers as well. ”*

**Cristina Silva**



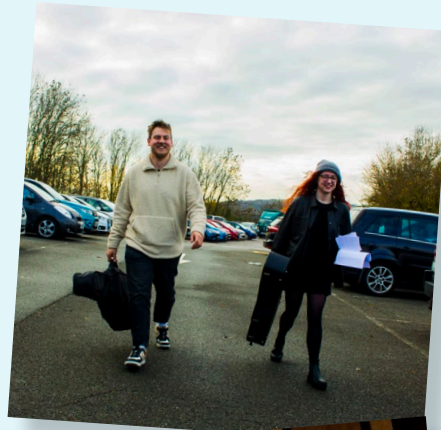
## CASE STUDY 1:

Jack and Seána met at their programme launch and found that individual goals aligned perfectly to collaborate together.

*“Seána’s main goal for the mentorship was to produce and release an E.P. out of songs she had written, and mine was to find artists who needed support with the production and development of their music. Seána and I realised we brought the best out of each other’s work, and we created something neither could have managed alone, that wouldn’t have happened without Creative Mentor Network introducing us.”*

### Jack Watson

With the support of other mentees on the programme, they were also able to put on a successful launch party for Seána’s E.P ‘S.W.A.L.K’, featuring other mentees, Teddy, as the event organizer and Poppy as the photographer.



Scan with Spotify to listen to Seána’s E.P

## CASE STUDY 2:

Obi and Courtney connected through our mentee WhatsApp community when he was looking for a designer to help create a poster for a charity music event he was running. The event, Jammerz & Friendz, was hosted at Omeara, to raise money for Youth Music, a charity that changes young people’s lives through music.

Access to this community supported Obi by getting advice from other people who had run events, promote it to a wider audience, and connect with creatives like Courtney to create high quality assets.

*“The WhatsApp community has been amazing at connecting myself with other creatives that need help on projects or just support. I don’t particularly know where to look for other creatives to collaborate with, so this group has been amazing at connecting me. Being a part of the Brighton cohort, it’s a much smaller community, so the group connected me with London-based creatives as well. It was through this network that I found Obi. I collaborated with Obi on creating posters and illustrations for his event, and it was a cool project to be a part of. Through this collaboration, I also made some other valuable connections and collaborations.”*

### Courtney Field



# LOOKING FORWARD

This year will mark our **10 year anniversary** of working to make the creative industry more socioeconomically diverse and inclusive. If anything, it's more important than ever that we continue to do this and work to support young creatives from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

## FOR OUR MENTEES

We've listened to feedback from our mentees and our youth board to help us plan 2024 more in line with their needs.

A key priority for the next year is increasing the number of events we run to give them more opportunities to network and collaborate with one another. We can see the benefits of this from the work we've done already, so hopefully we can amplify this impact even more.

We also surveyed our community regarding the types of companies and brands they'd like us to engage with more, and we will be reaching out to them to see how we can work together to make this possible.

## FOR OUR MENTORS AND PARTNERS

With the growing momentum of conversations on socioeconomic diversity for businesses, we want to ensure we can support those in the industry to make a positive impact.

In addition to running and refining our programmes, we want to encourage and support our partners in collecting and reporting on socioeconomic data. Without this data, it's impossible to make meaningful, lasting, change in the industry. It's essential that we, and organisations, can see where the gaps are so we know where to invest time and resources. Understanding if the problem lies in access or progression, or seeing how wide the class pay gap is, can't be fully understood without this information.

## FOR US

Socioeconomic diversity is an important topic, and we recognise we aren't the only people working to tackle the problems that exist. For us, 2024 will be about increased collaboration with the other incredible charities and organisations in this space. It's only with this unity that we can have a wider systemic impact on government policy and widespread awareness of the class inequalities in the UK.

Image by Rosie Morisson







# CREATIVE MENTOR NETWORK



CREATIVE  
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